

F1 How Mercedes hit back despite rear-wing controversy

AUTOSPORT

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18 NOVEMBER 2021

GAME ON!

Hamilton's greatest save

Qualifying exclusion and penalty
not enough to stop Lewis
defeating Max in Brazil

**"This is what a world
championship battle
should look like"**

LEWIS HAMILTON

VERSTAPPEN

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3 RACES
TO GO



PLUS How we pick the next British F1 stars

#GODO



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Yet another twist in a remarkable F1 title contest

Just when you think the Formula 1 title fight has finally settled into a pattern and Max Verstappen is putting some daylight between himself and Lewis Hamilton in the points, we get a race like that!

The first shock of the Interlagos weekend was the pace of Mercedes. Off the back of one of Red Bull's most dominant 2021 performances in Mexico, and at a venue Verstappen where has been victorious before, Hamilton topped qualifying by a whopping 0.4 seconds.

Then both championship protagonists fell foul of officialdom (see page 4), Hamilton much more so. His charge past 15 cars in the sprint contest was superb, but he still had to start the Sao Paulo Grand Prix 10th thanks to the change of his Mercedes powerplant.

That engine, which was surely turned up *high* last weekend, then helped Hamilton pull off a remarkable recovery (p14). Not only was it a brilliant drive to his 101st F1 victory, overcoming Verstappen who once again found time to run the Merc off the road during their battle, but it has brought the seven-time world champion back into the thick of the title fight just as it seemed like things were slipping away.

The next two venues – in Qatar and Saudi Arabia – are new to F1 (p11), so predicting the likely outcome at either seems even more futile in this back-and-forth campaign. It all suggests the battle will go to the Abu Dhabi finale. Let's just hope we get the fair showdown this fantastic season deserves.



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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**NEXT WEEK
25 NOVEMBER**

New venue for F1 fight
What twists can Qatar
provide in 2021's
thrilling contest?



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Zak Mauger/Motorsport Images

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‘END OF DIPLOMACY’ AS F1 TITLE WAR ESCALATES

FORMULA 1

Mercedes Formula 1 chief Toto Wolff declared that “diplomacy has ended” after Lewis Hamilton was thrown out of qualifying for last weekend’s Sao Paulo Grand Prix for a technical breach and tensions flared between the team and rival Red Bull.

On a fraught weekend for F1’s title-fighting teams, both Hamilton and championship rival Max Verstappen faced the stewards, while Mercedes found itself “taking punches all weekend”, said Wolff.

Hamilton topped Friday’s qualifying by 0.4 seconds, but the FIA’s post-session technical checks found an issue with his DRS. Technical delegate Jo Bauer referred Hamilton’s car to the stewards after the gap between the two rear-wing planes when DRS was open was found to be greater than the regulation 85mm.

A lengthy hearing followed on Friday night at Interlagos, before it was adjourned to give more time for evidence to be gathered.

A summons for Verstappen was also announced when video footage emerged of him touching the rear

wing of Hamilton’s car in parc ferme after qualifying, putting him in breach of the FIA’s International Sporting Code. That resulting in a €50,000 fine for the Dutchman.

Mercedes and the stewards agreed that Verstappen’s touch did not play a role in Hamilton’s DRS failing the technical check. Then, 19 and a half hours after the initial referral, Hamilton was disqualified from the results of qualifying, to leave him at the back of the sprint-race grid.

Mercedes argued that the part in question must have been damaged, causing it to fail the test by 0.2mm, and it would ordinarily have been able to repair it under parc ferme conditions, something Red Bull has done post-qualifying at the last three races with Verstappen’s rear wing.

But the FIA stewards did not deem this to be a mitigating circumstance, saying that the car did not comply with the conformity check, meaning Hamilton had to be disqualified. Mercedes opted not to appeal the decision.

Wolff felt that the refusal of the FIA’s technical department to allow Mercedes to address the DRS damage post-session and instead

report the matter straight to the stewards has resulted in a new protocol and that “something went against the modus operandi in these last 24 hours”.

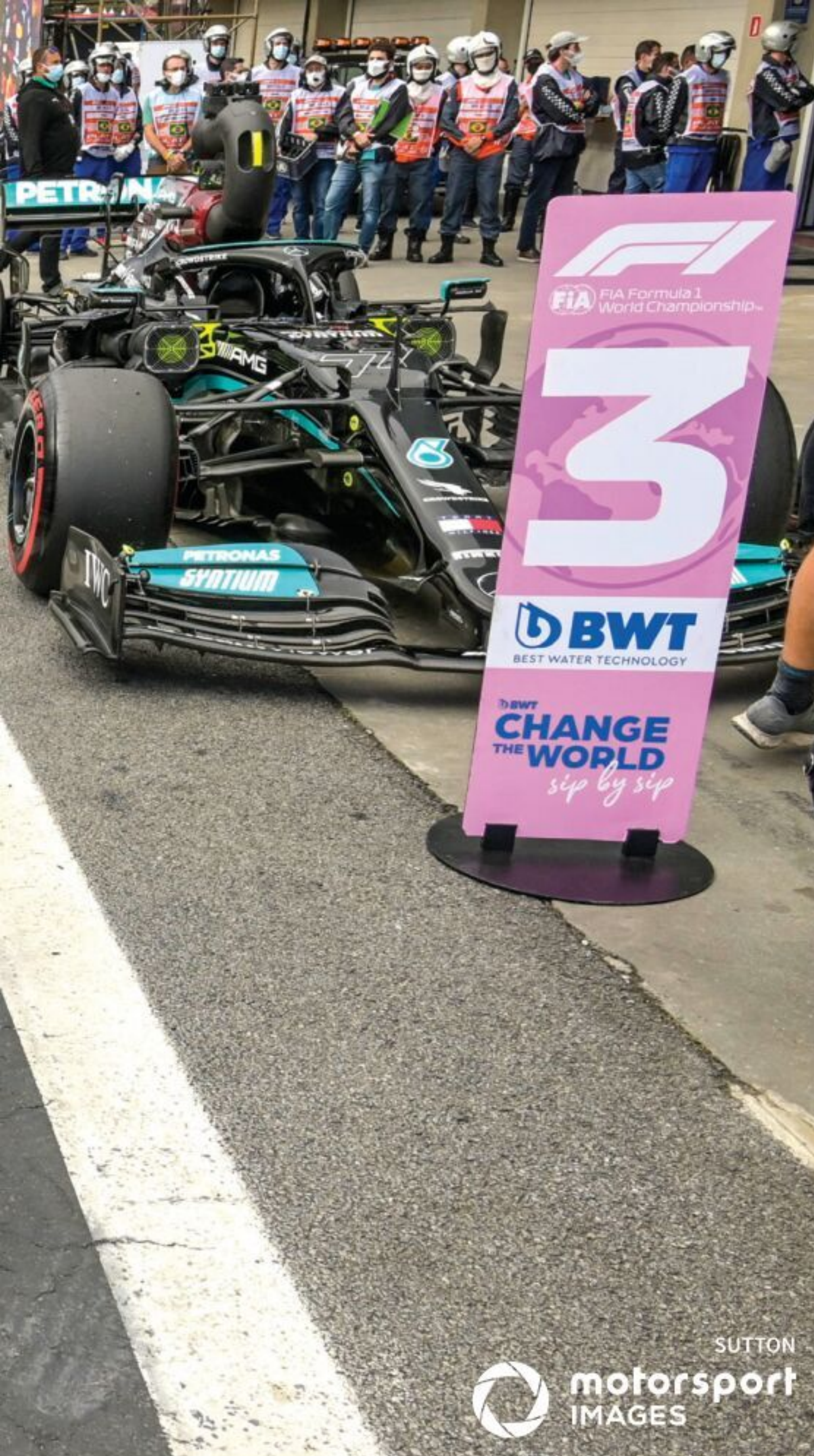
Red Bull team boss Christian Horner felt the rules had been applied fairly to throw Hamilton out of qualifying, saying: “It’s a tough decision for them, but in that situation it’s black or white.”

Hamilton fought through to finish the sprint race fifth, leaving him 10th on the grid for the Grand Prix with his engine penalty, before his charge to victory ahead of Verstappen.

Verstappen escaped any investigation from the stewards for an aggressive defensive move on Hamilton at Turn 4 in which both drivers ran off-track. Wolff called the decision “laughable”, believing at least a five-second penalty should have been applied.

Post-race, Hamilton was summoned for a second time after undoing his seatbelts on the cool-down lap, resulting in a €5000 fine.

“When always the decisions swing against you, it’s just something that I’m just angry about, and I will defend my team, my drivers to



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FIAPOOL

Facemasks at dawn
for Wolff and Horner

what comes,” Wolff said post-race. “I’ve always been very diplomatic in how I discuss things. But diplomacy has ended today.”

The weekend also sparked fresh intrigue over Mercedes’ rear-wing design due to its sizeable top-speed advantage. As Hamilton closed on Verstappen during the race, he was reaching a top speed almost 30 km/h quicker than his rival before braking at Turn 1, helped at least partly by his fresh engine.

Red Bull technical chief Adrian Newey met with FIA officials to discuss Mercedes’ rear wing, which Verstappen admitted he was “looking at how much the rear wing was flexing at that point” in parc ferme.

Horner called Mercedes’ top speed “mindboggling”. “It’s something that we’ve seen for a little while, but it’s down to the FIA to police,” he said. “The rules are quite concise, they’re ever more constrictive.”

“It’s something that we’re going to keep an eye on because, particularly with Lewis, you saw that was just a different league.”

LUKE SMITH

ZHOU GETS GIOVINAZZI’S ALFA SEAT

FORMULA 1

Guanyu Zhou will become China’s first Formula 1 race driver when he partners Valtteri Bottas at Alfa Romeo next season.

The team confirmed on Tuesday that the 22-year-old will replace Antonio Giovinazzi, who has been dropped after three seasons. Zhou will cut his ties with Alpine, where he has been part of its junior programme, initially under the Renault name, since 2019. He will make his on-track debut with his new team in the Abu Dhabi test in December.

“It was an important decision for the future of the company,” Alfa team principal Fred Vasseur told Autosport. “We have a big change in terms of regulations for 2022. We evaluated all the options that we had on the table. Valtteri was quite obvious for me.



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And alongside Valtteri, we had different options, and for tons of different reasons Zhou is the first choice.

“Performance is not based on one single pillar; it’s always a combination of speed, collaboration with the team and team-mate,

the financial side. We switched completely to the 2022 project very early, and all the company except the race team is fully focused on 2022. The fact that we confirmed the drivers is also another box ticked.”

ADAM COOPER

Aston boss coy on Alpine link

FORMULA 1

Aston Martin Formula 1 boss Otmar Szafnauer says he has “no intention of leaving” amid recent links with Alpine, but has drawn short of directly denying contact with the team.

Reports emerged last week linking Szafnauer with a possible switch to Alpine as part of the team’s management restructure. He took to Instagram on Thursday evening to call the reports “pure media speculation and not based on fact”. Aston Martin had also responded to a request for comment by describing it as “speculative conjecture”.

Szafnauer was grilled in Friday’s FIA press conference at Interlagos, and said he was “as surprised as anybody else” to read the reports. But when asked if he was definitely not joining Alpine at any stage in the future, Szafnauer fell short of ruling it out, saying: “I learned a long, long time ago that predicting the future



DUNBAR/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

is an impossibility. And if I could do that, I would be in Vegas now.”

Szafnauer said he had not discussed the reports with Aston owner Lawrence Stroll as “there’s lots of stuff that goes on in the media that we don’t talk about”.

Despite being “reticent to disclose contractual details”, Szafnauer did confirm that he had “a long-term contract in place with Aston” when asked if he had a deal for next year.

LUKE SMITH



Corvette commits to full WEC attack for first time

WEC

Chevrolet will contest a full season in the World Endurance Championship for the first time next year. The General Motors marque's Corvette Racing squad will mount a split programme in 2022 straddling the WEC and the IMSA SportsCar Championship in North America.

The Pratt & Miller-run team will field one of its C8.Rs in the WEC's GTE Pro class, while the other will race in IMSA in modified form against GT3 machinery in the new GT Daytona Pro division. Chevrolet has stated its intent to enter a second car alongside its full WEC entry for the Le Mans 24 Hours in June.

The team will head into the new season with an unchanged driver line-up: Nick Tandy and Tommy Milner will be the full-time drivers in WEC, with Antonio Garcia and Jordan Taylor anchoring the IMSA campaign. The two crews will again be joined respectively by Alexander Sims and Nicky Catsburg for the longer races, including Le Mans.

Jim Campbell, vice-president of performance and motorsport at Chevrolet, said: "This is the most ambitious schedule that Corvette Racing has faced in its nearly 25 years of competition. It will be an honour to race in both the IMSA and WEC series at some of the best tracks in the world."

Next year's IMSA campaign will be with a modified version of the GTE-spec C8.R. Revised aerodynamics and decreased power

will bring it into line with the GT3 cars for which GTD Pro was devised in place of GTLM, while the car will also run anti-lock brakes.

Chevrolet's GTD Pro entry will be a prelude to the arrival of a new GT3 contender. The Chevrolet Corvette Z06 GT3.R will make its race debut in 2024 and will be available to customers as demanded by the rules.

Chevrolet is still evaluating its plans for 2023 and where it will compete with the GT3.R. "If there are options for factory GT3 participation, then we would seriously consider those avenues for the Corvette Racing team," said a spokesman. That suggests that it will race on in IMSA, which will allow all-pro line-ups in its premier GT division. The future is less clear at Le Mans: race organiser and WEC promoter the Automobile Club de l'Ouest has said that it does not envisage a pro GT category after GT3 replaces GTE for 2024.

Glickenhauser, meanwhile, has committed to fielding a solo entry in the full WEC after a statement from series boss Frederic Lequien demanding such. The American entrant will run a single Le Mans Hypercar at the Sebring and Spa rounds in March and May respectively and plans to enter two cars at Le Mans.

How many it will run beyond that is undecided. Team boss Jim Glickenhauser said the only caveat to its participation in all six races is that "we have to get a fair Balance of Performance, which I believe we will get".

GARY WATKINS

Porsche backs down on appeal

WEC

Ferrari pair James Calado and Alessandro Pier Guidi have been confirmed as the 2021 World Endurance Championship GTE title winners. The confirmation came with the decision of Porsche not to pursue the appeal of the stewards' decision to reject its protest after the Bahrain finale.

Porsche announced last Wednesday evening that it would not be continuing its case as the 96 hours it had to formalise its appeal came to an end. The move means that Ferrari is also confirmed as manufacturers' champion.

A statement in a series of Tweets from the German manufacturer read: "Porsche had announced it would appeal against the rejection of the protest. An in-depth analysis of the situation and the advice of legal counsel have led to a decision not to pursue legal action any further."

The protest was based on an alleged violation of the FIA's International Sporting Code. It argued that the race director alone ordered the sanction given to the #51 Ferrari 488 GTE Evo after Pier Guidi made contact with Michael Christensen's #92 Porsche 911 RSR, which he co-drove with championship challengers Kevin Estre and Neel Jani.

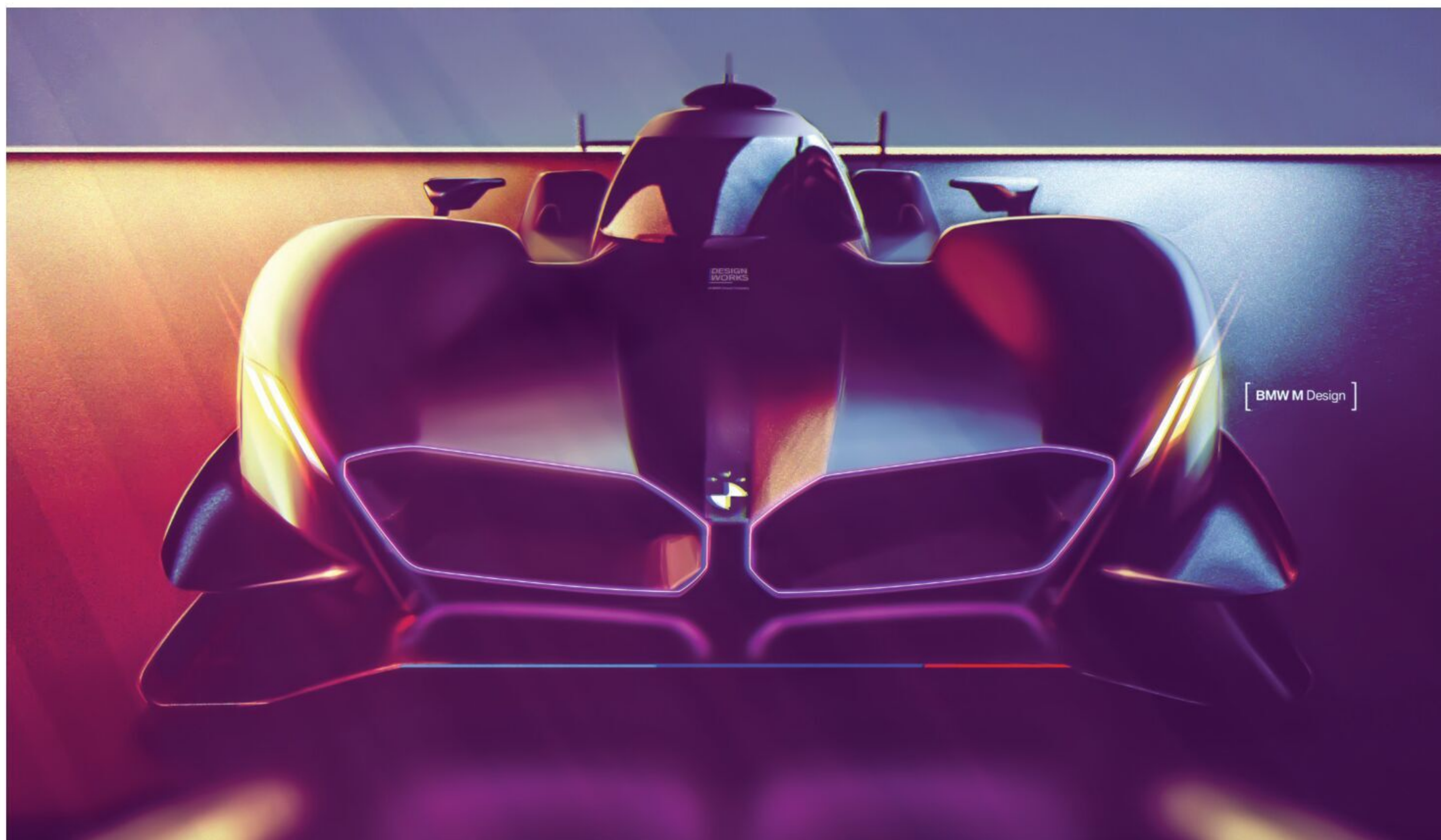
The relevant article of the code states that where there is contact between two cars, the incident must be reported to the stewards. The stewards' bulletin rejecting the protest stated that the code had been fully adhered to.

Pier Guidi was told to give the class lead back to Christensen after the incident. This was rescinded after the Ferrari slowed and then the Porsche pitted.

A final Tweet from Porsche read: "In the interests of the sport, Porsche would in future like to see a stringent and uniform approach taken to penalties for violations on the track – especially during the race."

GARY WATKINS





WEC/IMSA BMW has offered a taste of how its forthcoming LMDh prototype will look, at the same time as confirming that Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing will continue a relationship with the marque stretching back to 2009 into the new era for the IMSA SportsCar Championship. These so-called “preliminary sketches” are the result of a collaboration between BMW Motorsport, the marque’s Designworks studio and Dallara, on whose next-generation LMP2 design a car to be known as the BMW M LMDh is being developed. RLLR will run two of the cars in IMSA from 2023, with team founder Bobby Rahal describing the chance to go for overall wins as “a dream come true”. Prior to the arrival of the LMDh, Rahal will run a pair of BMW’s new M4 GT3s in the GT Daytona Pro class. **Image by BMW**

Kirkwood moves into top flight with Foyt

INDYCAR SERIES

Indy Lights champion Kyle Kirkwood, the superstar of American junior open-wheel racing, will step up to the IndyCar Series with the famed AJ Foyt Racing #14 car in 2022.

The 23-year-old from Florida has won a staggering 56 races across Indy Lights, Indy Pro 2000, USF2000, F3 Americas and US F4, along with all five titles. But his erstwhile team owner Michael Andretti

couldn’t find a berth for him in his IndyCar team.

Kirkwood’s contract meant he wasn’t allowed to start negotiating with other teams until this month, so in the meantime he squeezed in three tests in an Andretti Autosport IndyCar at Sebring, Barber Motorsports Park and Indianapolis road course.

He brings with him approximately \$1.25million in scholarship funding for winning the Lights crown, which



guaranteed him three race entries in the 2022 IndyCar season — St Petersburg, the Grand Prix of Indianapolis and the Indianapolis 500.

“I actually met Larry [Foyt, team president] for the first time

in 2018,” said Kirkwood. “He was the first person in the IndyCar paddock to show me around the car. From that moment, I felt very comfortable with the atmosphere of the team.”

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

ROAD TO INDY

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Bournemouth's plan to emulate Birmingham

Previous British mainland street track was Birmingham. Alesi leads Chiesa in 1988

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FORMULA E

An optimistic bid from the Wessex Entrepreneurs group has been created to find Bournemouth a place on the Formula E calendar and showcase the seaside town as a “gateway to an international Dorset”.

The three-year deal – which has a 2023 start date so would clash with the London ExCeL contract – would headline a week-long “festival” alongside a business conference and seeks to create anywhere between 250 and 3000 jobs, according to the official PowerPoint presentation.

While this would potentially create only the second closed-road street circuit for car

racing on the British mainland, after the F3000 Birmingham Superprix of 1986–90, the Wessex group’s ambitions are at odds with Formula E’s own desire to race in ‘tier-one’ cities such as Rome and New York. But that hasn’t stopped the initial plan for an approximately 3.4-mile street track, which takes in a series of roundabouts and a section of the A338 as it runs past the pier and the Royal Bath hotel.

The nascent race’s main backer Tony Williams reckons: “We are selling it as a British Monaco. The county has been in decline for the last few years. We are trying to make the quantum leap back, using Bournemouth as the gateway and Formula E

as the flag to wave to the world and to help rejuvenate the rest of Dorset.”

In favour of the bid, local driver Sam Bird has already cast his eye over the plans, while Dorset has existing ties to electric motorsport, with the Bovington military base hosting the Extreme E finale next month.

- The cloud hanging over leading FE team Techeetah appears to be lifting. Despite owner SECA turning off the taps during COVID to leave many staff unpaid, champion Antonio Felix da Costa and Jean-Eric Vergne (who was out of contract over the summer) have both re-signed for 2022.

MATT KEW

Bob Bondurant 1933-2021

OBITUARY

Bob Bondurant, who has died at the age of 88, had a class win at the Le Mans 24 Hours and nine world championship Formula 1 starts to his name. Yet his enduring fame came from the racing school that bore his name for 50 years.

Half a million drivers passed through the gates of the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving in various locations from its creation in 1968 until closure in 2018. The idea for the school was conceived – during a conversation with God, he told interviewers – on his hospital bed after a serious accident in the 1967 Watkins Glen Grand Prix, a round

of the United States Road Racing Championship, driving a Chevrolet-powered McLaren Elva MkIII.

The big break for Bondurant, who started out racing motorcycles, came when Carroll Shelby invited him to race his Cobra Daytonas from 1963. He took GT class honours at Le Mans the following year, and in 1965 was part of the line-up that claimed class honours in the International Championship for Manufacturers ahead of Ferrari.

Bondurant’s F1 career straddled the 1965 and 1966 seasons. His best result was a distant fourth as the final classified finisher at the 1966 Monaco Grand Prix at the wheel of a privateer BRM P261.

GARY WATKINS



MILLER/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



CARRERA CUP NORTH AMERICA Seb Priaulx, the son of three-time World Touring Car champion Andy Priaulx, claimed the inaugural Carrera Cup North America title with victory in the first of three races at last weekend's Road Atlanta finale. That put the crown beyond reach of Kay van Berlo, his team-mate at Kelly-Moss Racing, a partner team to Multimatic Motorsports of which Priaulx is a protege. Priaulx was second in race two, then won again in the final race to take his season victory tally to six. **Photograph by Multimatic Motorsports**

King test fires up silly season

BTCC

What may amount to no more than a 'suck-it-and-see' test from ex-GP2 race winner, IndyCar racer and Manor Formula 1 FP1 participant Jordan King at Snetterton last week shed a chink of light upon what is building up into an entertaining British Touring Car Championship silly season.

King tested a Motorbase Performance Ford Focus as the team gears up for its second season under the ownership of Pete Osborne, father of BTCC regular Sam. It is understood that a parting of the ways with Mark Blundell's MB Motorsport, under which banner Motorbase operated two Focuses this year for Jake Hill and Ollie Jackson, is highly possible.

While Jackson and Osborne look likely to stay on, and Tom Chilton's name has been firmly linked to a return to the team for 2022, the future of Hill is the subject of much speculation, especially since he has been taken on as a member of Blundell's MB Partners management stable since finishing fifth in the 2021 standings.

King, who hasn't raced since December 2019, when he drove an LMP1 Ginetta,

enjoyed the test (below), despite mainly slippery conditions. "In truth I'm looking at anything for next year — I'm not saying I *am* looking at it [BTCC], I'm not saying I'm *not* looking at it," he said. "If I can make it a pure professional drive then I'll look into it."

Osborne Sr added: "He's just such a professional at everything he does. To be able to bring someone like that to the BTCC would be an absolute dream for us."

A coy Hill said: "Lots of things are happening — I've always wanted to be in the best car I possibly can. I really did enjoy this year with Motorbase, and it's set me up hopefully for another good year in 2022."

MARCUS SIMMONS



IN THE HEADLINES

PIASTRI IS ALPINE RESERVE

Formula 2 points leader Oscar Piastri has been named as Alpine's F1 reserve driver for 2022, replacing Daniil Kvyat. The role will include an "extensive testing programme" to help prepare the Australian for an F1 race seat in 2023. Meanwhile, BMW GT racer and Aston Martin F1 simulator driver Nick Yelloly will take part for the latter team in next month's F1 rookie test at Yas Marina.

LONG ROAD COMES TO END

Two-time Le Mans 24 Hours class winner Patrick Long is stepping back from full-time racing. The 40-year-old, a Porsche factory driver since 2004, is instead moving into an ambassadorial and advisory role with the German manufacturer's American arm. Long said that his passion for motorsport had not diminished, but that it is "now more fulfilled by taking part in the bigger picture".

DE PASQUALE ON FORM

Anton De Pasquale and Will Brown took the wins as Australia's Supercars circus continued its Sydney Motorsport Park residency for a third weekend. In-form DJR Ford star De Pasquale won the first from series leader Shane van Gisbergen, and the second from Jamie Whincup. With De Pasquale's tyre bank exhausted, rookie Brown took a sensational first win in his Erebus Holden in race three. He had squabbling Triple Eight Holden pair van Gisbergen and Whincup to thank. Whincup disobeyed team orders and claimed second.

HUGHES IN DTM MERC TEST

The HRT Mercedes team tested four newcomers at Paul Ricard last week as it bids to repeat the 2021 DTM title it won with Maximilian Gotz. Formula 2 racers Jake Hughes, Lirim Zendeli and David Beckmann got behind the wheel over two days of running with the Mercedes-AMG GT3, along with FIA F3 race winner David Schumacher, son of ex-DTM racer Ralf.

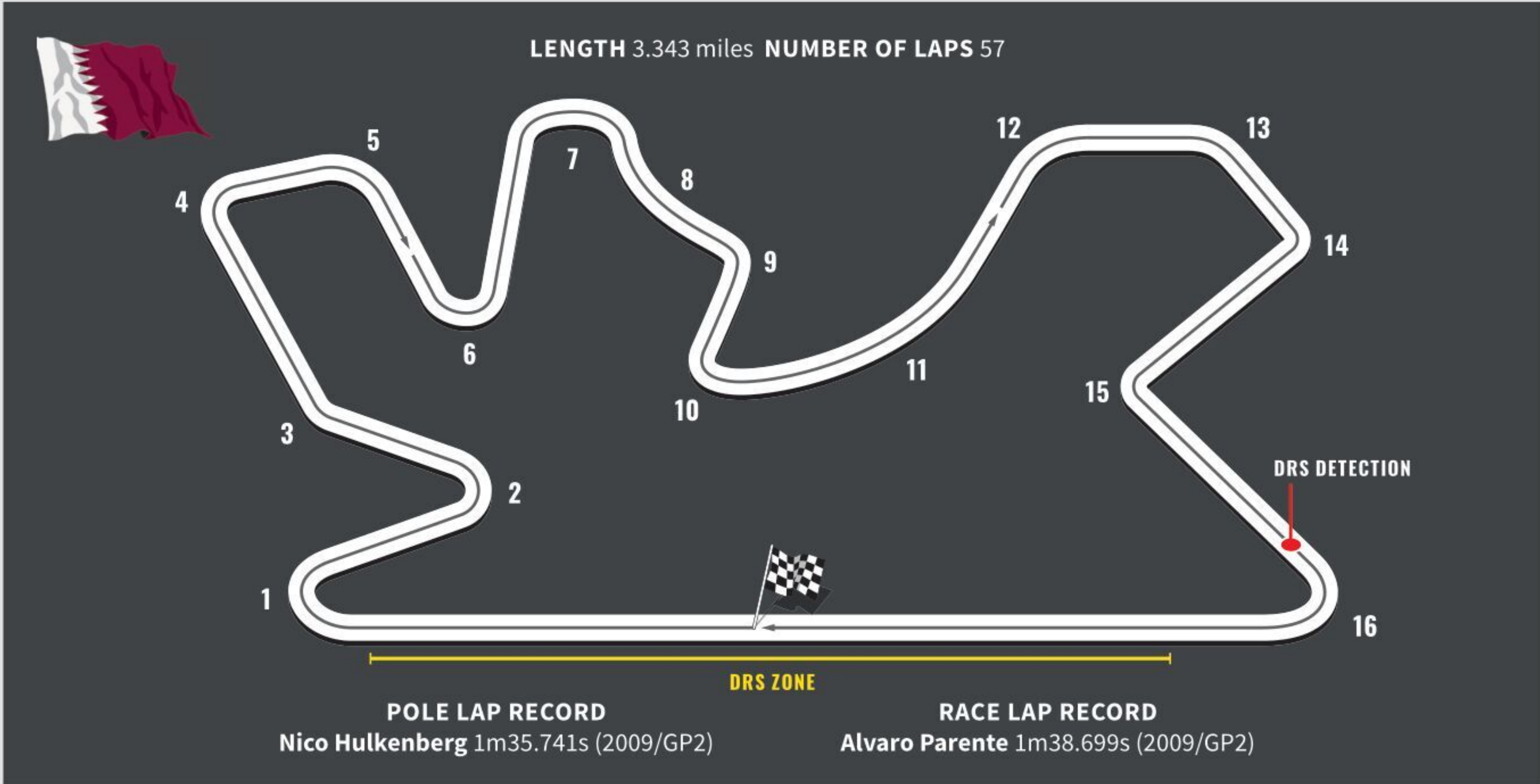
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F1 QATAR GRAND PRIX PREVIEW



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Sunday 21 November
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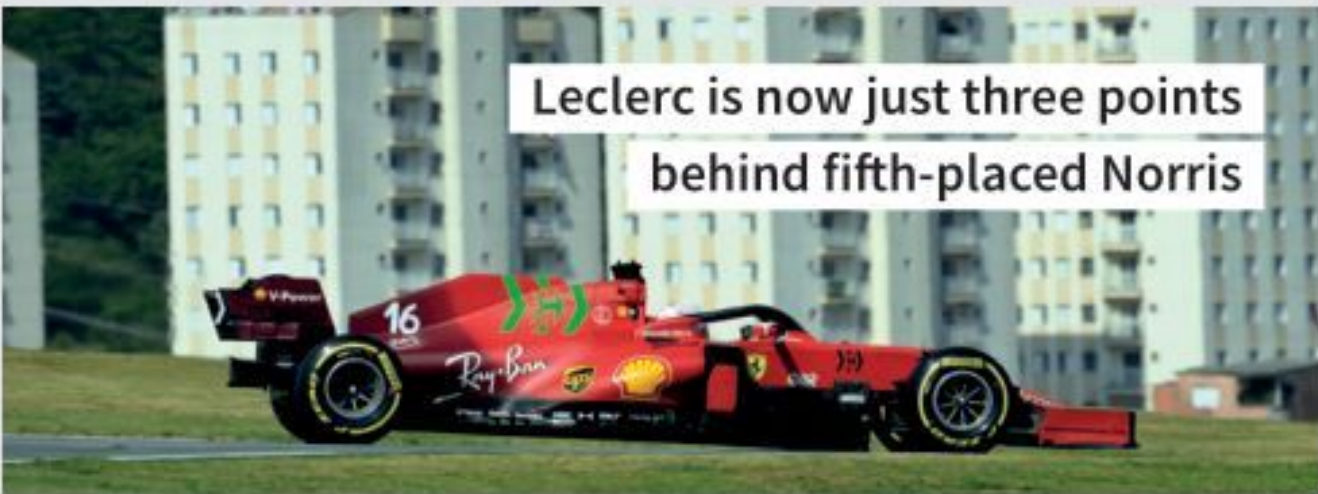
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TYRE ALLOCATION



CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

Drivers			Constructors		
1	Verstappen	332.5	1	Mercedes	521.5
2	Hamilton	318.5	2	Red Bull	510.5
3	Bottas	203	3	Ferrari	287.5
4	Perez	178	4	McLaren	256
5	Norris	151	5	Alpine	112





New tracks' impact on title fight

The prospect of two unfamiliar circuits, plus a revised layout for the season finale, adds extra layers of speculation, intrigue and pressure for the final three grands prix

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

This time one year ago, a virtuoso performance from Lewis Hamilton sealed his seventh Formula 1 world title. Last weekend, his most recent stunning victory in last weekend's Sao Paulo Grand Prix kept his 2021 title battle with Max Verstappen close.

Back in 2020, F1 was leaving Turkey ahead of a triple-header in the Middle East to close out its pandemic-altered schedule. It was different, but familiar, with Bahrain and Abu Dhabi the hosts for the final dead rubbers. The Sakhir GP's alternate layout from the regular Bahrain track added variety, but the different races ending the 2021 campaign are also throwing up plenty of unknowns with which the teams must grapple.

F1 heads to Losail for the inaugural Qatar GP this weekend before making its first visit to Saudi Arabia. The number of countries using the championship's profile for their own ends continues to widen (and yes, the UK can be included on that list, considering its government's actions to place Silverstone on the COVID-social-research pilot scheme to allow full spectator attendance just before lockdown restrictions were basically fully lifted, to showcase the success of its vaccination programme in Brexit's context). Sick of sport and politics mixing? Well, they always do...

Focusing on the sporting impact of new events at the climax of a championship, F1 is on rather unfamiliar ground this year. Taking the world championship's formation in 1950 as an outrageously

“These races are throwing up plenty of unknowns with which the teams must grapple”

convenient starting point, and considering just wholly new layouts or new venues entirely, as we have with Qatar and Saudi Arabia, then F1 must go back to 1984 to find the last time such fresh events helped close out a season. That year featured the 'non-Nordschleife' Nurburgring GP layout's first appearance, with Estoril the season finale. There, Niki Lauda sealed the crown with second place behind team-mate and title rival Alain Prost.

Going back a further 25 years reveals the previous instance of two new venues appearing late in a title fight: 1959, when Monsanto in Portugal and the Sebring finale sandwiched the established Monza. Contact at the start at Sebring between the Ferraris meant contender Tony Brooks made a precautionary pitstop and finished third, while Stirling Moss retired from the lead with gearbox damage. All that left Jack Brabham to take the crown, despite

pushing his out-of-fuel Cooper-Climax over the line.

The year before, 1958, ended with new venues in Portugal (Oporto) and Morocco, either side of Monza. In the Casablanca finale, Moss dominated in his Vanwall but Ferrari's Phil Hill stepped aside for team-mate Mike Hawthorn to take second and the title. Seven years before that, the second world championship ended with Juan Manuel Fangio sealing his first crown with the original Nurburgring and the Pedralbes street circuit as two of the three final rounds (Monza again sandwiched in the middle). In Barcelona, Fangio won after Ferrari's wheel-size alterations contributed to its three-race win-streak ending and Alberto Ascari missing out.

High-profile crashes, poor reliability, team-mate interventions and set-up choices going wrong — all that's happened so far in 2021 too. And now Red Bull and Mercedes head to this year's other two new races, as F1 steps onto unfamiliar ground at a pivotal point in a campaign once again. Now the new races are arriving, we can assess their likely impact on the 2021 world title with greater confidence.

Qatar looks to favour Red Bull, given it is mainly a mix of high and medium-speed corners, where the RB16B excels. Although there is a long main straight, that won't necessarily mean Mercedes can stay in the game with awesome straightline speed, *a la* Interlagos.

It seems logical that the very-high-speed Jeddah street layout will favour Mercedes. Whatever the reality, the team on pole will gain a major advantage, given the narrow confines of the circuit. But with 27 corners and such high speed being threaded through the walls, crashes and resulting safety cars will surely mean big strategy calls become just as pivotal in deciding the outcome.

And then there's Abu Dhabi. With the approach to the first long back straight changed, the series of 90-degree turns at the end of the second replaced by a long, fast left-hander, and the corners running under the track's giant hotel widened, the formbook is rather thrown out. But if the title contenders arrive at the last race having won one more race, each in front of the other (leaving the ridiculous fastest-lap point out here for the sake of simplicity), Verstappen could afford to not win the Yas Marina finale so long as he finished on the podium, assuming a Hamilton victory. That again highlights how much both need Valtteri Bottas and Sergio Perez to get among the top positions at the upcoming new races. If they do, this will also pin extra importance upon the fastest lap bonuses banked so far in 2021.

All of the expected title-fight-climax pressures are building on the four drivers at F1's two leading squads. But they've now got to cope with them on unfamiliar ground, where the importance of every decision they must make on car set-up and behind the wheel is correspondingly amplified. ❧

 **P14 SAO PAULO GP REPORT**



A win-win Monza showdown

Whether it's Sebastien Ogier securing an eighth WRC title at the end of his full-time career, or Elfyn Evans lifting his first, the season finale promises a feel-good storyline

TOM HOWARD

Whatever happens at this weekend's Rally Monza finale, the 2021 World Rally Championship is set for a fairytale ending.

For the second year in succession the title fight has gone down to the wire to be fought over by the master, seven-time WRC champion Sebastien Ogier, and his Toyota team-mate apprentice, Elfyn Evans. This case of *deja vu* played out on Italy's asphalt roads around Monza has the potential to create two equally special outcomes.

Monza will offer Ogier the last chance to win a world championship as the full-time WRC activities of one of the sport's all-time greats draw towards a close. While it's only a partial goodbye — the Frenchman is to contest a limited campaign in a third Toyota entry shared with Esapekka Lappi next year — few would begrudge Ogier capping his glittering rallying career by lifting an eighth world title.

Likewise, the alternative ending to this unpredictable and fascinating title race this season would mean the end of a 20-year drought. Should Evans succeed, he would become the first Briton to win the title since the late Richard Burns saw off Colin McRae to win the 'Battle of the Brits' and seal the 2001 crown.

In many ways for the WRC, it's a win-win scenario whoever secures the championship spoils.

The cards appear to be stacked against Evans as Ogier holds

“We know Seb is a smart guy and it's going to take something pretty radical to overtake him”

a 17-point lead, with 30 on the table at Monza. It means Evans must finish in the top two no matter what happens to Ogier, who can seal the title by scoring 13 points, equivalent to finishing fourth overall with fifth in the powerstage. He also, of course, sealed the crown at Monza last year despite travelling to Italy with a deficit to Evans.

The 37-year-old won four of the first six rallies, courtesy of triumphs in Monte Carlo, Croatia, Sardinia and Kenya, and it seemed Ogier would waltz into the sunset trophy in hand. But a poor second half of the season by his own high standards, coupled with an in-form Evans, has meant a 44-point lead was whittled down to 17 in just two events, thanks to a memorable Evans win in Finland and a second last time out in Spain.

Ogier knows he will be facing a real fight from the Welshman

at Monza. “I know that he is strong and I have known since the beginning of the year,” says Ogier. “Two years battling for the championship at the last rally is not coming by surprise. I think we can say we had the edge on him for a good part of the season, but now recently since I have been in this managing position and not giving 100%, and being on the safe side, you can see the gaps are very small in this championship.”

“If you adopt this more careful strategy you can fall back in the rankings and not be as sharp as you can be. The last two rallies have not been very strong for me, and him winning in Finland and being second in Spain, I'm sure he will give everything in Monza. I know it is not over yet and we have to perform as well to win.”

“I guess that is why I'm not thinking as much about the fact that it is the end of the full-time career. So far I haven't been caught by the emotions, let's see what happens. First of all the plan is to finish on a high, of course. It might be an emotional weekend at the end.”

Evans is fully aware that his title prospects heading into Monza are not as strong as last year, when he held a 14-point lead over Ogier. A rare error meant he crashed out in treacherous snowy conditions, effectively handing his team-mate and rival the crown.

But this is the perfect example to illustrate how a championship race can turn 180 degrees, quite literally. This can be fuel for Evans, who is in strong form coming into the title decider. He has shown great mental fortitude to stage an incredible fightback after his hopes were dampened by hitting a rock on the Safari Rally in June, and gearbox dramas on the Acropolis in September.

“It's good to be going into the final round still with a chance of taking the drivers' title,” says Evans. “It's an outside chance, but [co-driver] Scott [Martin] and I will give it our best shot. The approach will be just to aim for the best result possible and see what happens.”

“After a difficult mid-season, the last couple of rounds have been better for us, but Monza will be a completely different challenge again. My thoughts are that it [the title] is still alive and it's probably a very similar situation to last year, except the shoe is on the other foot.”

“We know anything can happen, but we also know Seb is a pretty smart guy and it's going to take something pretty radical to overtake him. But having said that it's quite clear what we have to do in Monza.”

If the title fight wasn't enough to get the pulses and emotions racing, Monza also brings the curtain down on arguably the WRC's fastest and most spectacular cars, as the 'modern day Group B' beasts have one final runout before being replaced by 2022's all-new Rally1 hybrid machines. 🏆

YOUR SAY

The refusal to stamp down on Verstappen's bad driving is setting a dangerous precedent that doing anything to maintain position is acceptable

ANDREW DALE

Verstappen needs taking to task

I'm at a loss to understand why the FIA hasn't taken any action against the continued over-aggressive tactics of Max Verstappen.

This weekend saw an incredible comeback win from Lewis Hamilton, which was nearly denied by Verstappen's blatant actions. Once Hamilton was past Verstappen on the straight approaching Turn 4 on lap 48, Verstappen attempted to retake the position by clearly forcing Hamilton off and illegally retook the position. This was followed by Verstappen's blatant weaving to maintain position.

The FIA's refusal to stamp down on Verstappen's bad driving is not only setting a dangerous precedent that doing anything to maintain position is acceptable, but combined with the questionable disqualification of Hamilton's car from qualifying after damage was found (which goes against how damaged parts have been treated historically) raises suspicions of bias.

I understand there is a desire among many to see variety in the winners of races and the championship, but this cannot be allowed to influence sporting and technical decisions.

Andrew Dale
Swindon

A drive to go down in history

The superb victory that Lewis Hamilton delivered on Sunday at the Sao Paulo Grand Prix will go down, in my opinion, as one of those drives we witness every now and then by the greatest racers and will be looked back on and admired for years, if not decades.

It will be bracketed, I would suggest, with Juan Manuel Fangio's 1957 win at the Nurburgring, Jim Clark's drive at Monza in 1967 (although Jimmy didn't win it), and Ayrton Senna's win at the European GP at Donington Park in 1993 (incidentally my first visit to an F1 event).

It's another exciting chapter in this fabulous season we are enjoying, and adds to the thrilling crescendo of the last three races that are coming up. I can't wait for the next race!

MA Smith
By email



The last word on maiden?

Regarding Patrick Frank's letter (4 November), while both the noun and the adjective 'maiden' have the same etymological roots, their meanings have become distinct.

The Old English 'maegden' is derived from a Germanic term denoting a young woman/maid/virgin, but in modern usage, for example 'a fair young maiden' (noun) and 'a maiden podium' (adjective), they are now decidedly different.

The mish-mash of Celtic, Germanic and Romance languages that make up today's English, with some Greek added, along with words borrowed from the likes of India, are what make the vocabulary so large and the rules of grammar complicated — and therefore so difficult to learn as a foreign language.

Graeme Innes-Johnstone
Elland

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HAMILTON STRIKES BACK IN BRAZIL

The world champion put his post-qualifying travails behind him with a brilliant charge to victory from 10th place on the grid

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY



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Hamilton rose to the occasion amid the pressure of the title fight to take a resounding win





M

ax Verstappen's drive to win the 2021 Mexican Grand Prix was that of a champion. Lewis Hamilton's subsequent drive to win the main race of Formula 1's visit to Brazil was that of a seven-time world champion. Consider the stakes with so few races remaining. Consider the pressure all that post-qualifying exclusion

controversy created. Consider just how scintillating plenty of those sprint race and Grand Prix passes were. Hamilton lived up to his legend.

But he was almost forgotten about at start of the main Interlagos race, when Verstappen reversed his sprint race loss from pole against Valtteri Bottas. This time the Red Bull made the better getaway from the left-hand side of the grid, Verstappen quickly alongside Bottas as the Finn had an "average" launch with "a bit of clutch slip". But he made a good fist of trying to wrestle back the lead that was fast departing his hands as the pair shot down through the Turn 1 apex.

Bottas hung on around the outside, but Verstappen shoved him wide and half off the track. The move was very firm, but fair – it just added to Bottas's "nightmare" first lap because it meant he lost more momentum through the rest of the Senna Esses and soon had Sergio Perez alongside him as they raced down Interlagos's shorter second straight. At Turn 4, later to be the scene of fireworks, Perez feigned to the outside and Bottas, carrying too much speed on the tighter inside line, slipped off into the runoff and fell behind.

Verstappen had a 1.3-second lead at the end of lap one of 71, with Hamilton an afterthought in the pack at this stage as he made up good

ground at Turn 1, then riskily nipped past Pierre Gasly on the outside of Turns 6-7 to take seventh. He then sealed sixth with a run around Sebastian Vettel's outside ahead of Turn 1 on lap two. He passed the Ferrari pair at this point in successive laps, with Bottas ordered to let him past at the same spot at the start of the fifth tour.

Hamilton was already behind just the Red Bulls, but the race was then interrupted by a safety car interjection, so that debris strewn across the Esses in the aftermath of Yuki Tsunoda clattering Lance Stroll at the start of lap four could be cleared. Once the pack had been led through the pitlane twice, the race resumed at the start of the 10th tour, Verstappen wisely leaving it until he was nearly back to the top grid hatchings, Perez keeping Hamilton at bay in his wake. The leader immediately restored his advantage to 1.3s, after which Perez began to come under considerable pressure from the marauding Mercedes.

Perez called for Verstappen to drop back to give him DRS assistance – something the Alpines had modest success with later in the race, before Gasly got Fernando Alonso and Esteban Ocon in any case. But to do so would have exposed Verstappen to an increased undercut threat from either Mercedes, the top four already quickly clear of the two following Ferraris.

On lap 18, after Perez had weaved a touch naughtily through the grid markings, Hamilton made a breathtaking move to his outside at Turn 1, slamming the brakes on so late but still staying on the plunging left-hander and getting ahead. But the Mexican did not give up, using DRS into Turn 4 to seize second back again on the outside line and hand Verstappen a nifty advantage – his lead was increased to 3.8s by this thrilling racing.



Verstappen nailed his Grand Prix getaway to seize the lead, as Bottas lost momentum in his wake



Bottas was muscled wide in firm but fair move by Verstappen

The next time by, however, Hamilton's near-identical Turn 1 pass came off for good, as Perez was unable to stay so close through the Esses. Now, the game everyone had really been waiting for arrived. Separated by stewarding decisions since the shambles in parc ferme on Friday afternoon, F1's two leading drivers were set to resume battle.

After chasing Verstappen for six laps, Hamilton reported that his medium tyres were starting to slide. Up ahead, the Dutchman, who like everyone else bar Tsunoda (softs) had started on the same rubber, had just given similar feedback. And so, the opening exchanges of a tense strategy battle entered a race that, really, had it all.

Mercedes made the first aggressive call at the end of lap 26, bringing >>

QUALIFYING



Before the fascinating parc ferme saga kicked off immediately afterwards, the Friday evening qualifying session in Sao Paulo was packed with intrigue, as Mercedes hit back against Red Bull following its Mexican race drubbing.

Lewis Hamilton had spent much of first practice complaining that his W12's front suspension was too stiff but, after adjustments, he was happier and topped the session as he and Valtteri Bottas completed a series of late runs on the soft tyres. Red Bull, meanwhile, gave Max Verstappen and Sergio Perez just one go at getting their eyes in for the Q1-Q2-Q3 session.

That raised expectations of a close battle for pole, especially with the need to take medium tyres in Q2 – an adjustment that has occasionally caught out Verstappen – removed by the sprint weekend format rules. These mandate softs only in qualifying.

Hamilton was armed with a new internal combustion engine that would have given a small performance boost with its freshness and may have then been set in a higher power mode given that the end of the season is not far away. Red Bull team boss Christian Horner insisted it gave Hamilton “a couple of tenths”, and he was indeed unstoppable throughout qualifying. He topped Q1 – where Nicholas Latifi gave George Russell a first conventional qualifying defeat at Williams, the pair knocked out in 17th and 18th – and Q2.

The cloud cover hanging over Interlagos helped Mercedes, as it kept the track cool and in conditions that favour it more than the heat that sends things more in Red Bull's direction. The RB16B gets more understeer in cooler conditions, but Hamilton was also generally flying. On the first runs in Q3, he posted a 1m08.107s, ahead of Verstappen – complaining of overheating front tyres caused by the additional sliding stemming from his understeer – by 0.265 seconds, with Bottas 0.362s adrift in third.

“RED BULL TEAM BOSS CHRISTIAN HORNER INSISTED HAMILTON'S NEW ENGINE GAVE HIM ‘A COUPLE OF TENTHS’”

That pair failed to better their times on the second runs, with Verstappen losing time clipping the Turn 2 apex kerb hard and being fed deeper into Turn 3 than the ideal line, and also having to lift to catch a big oversteer snap exiting Turn 12 at the foot of the hill running up to the line. Bottas locked up at the slow Turn 10 right-hand hairpin late in the second sector, missing the apex and losing momentum.

But Hamilton continued to find time. Despite catching his own brief oversteer snap at the Turn 1 apex, he found time as the lap went on to break the 1m08s barrier and seal pole with a 1m07.934s. With much controversy set to follow, that put him, temporarily, a massive 0.438s clear of Verstappen.

SPRINT RACE

Once Lewis Hamilton had been disqualified from qualifying for the Sao Paulo Grand Prix, it was clear that Formula 1's third sprint race would be all about two main stories. How much could Valtteri Bottas disrupt inherited-first-place starter Max Verstappen? And how far could Hamilton recover?

In the former, proceedings were set in motion by the tyre choices. Verstappen, as expected, lined up on the mediums. But Bottas, after Mercedes had found "the soft behaved a bit better than we expected" in the Friday FP1 long runs, was given the red-walled rubber instead. With better bite off the line, and optimistically long life overall, Mercedes "gambled a little bit", again according to Bottas, because "we thought the best chance to get the lead was the race start". And it was.

Bottas actually reacted slower to the lights going out, but he was still quickly alongside. And the Red Bull was having an additional problem, since Verstappen "somehow lost all the gear syncs" and didn't accelerate normally. Bottas was therefore able to seize the lead as they braked.

By the end of the first lap of 24, he was 1.4 seconds clear – but of



Norris wise not to put up too much of a fight against flying Hamilton

Carlos Sainz Jr, who had muscled his way past Verstappen into the fast Turn 4 downhill left at the end of the second straight. The Ferrari driver had spotted track temperatures falling nearly a full degree to 35.7C when it came to making his tyre choice and so also grabbed the softs, which he too used to great effect at the start, jumping Sergio Perez immediately.

But Sainz's hold on second didn't last long. At the start of lap three, Verstappen used DRS to easily blast ahead on the run to the first corner

and set off after Bottas. He steadily chipped away at the leader's now 2.6s advantage, running within DRS range in the race's middle phase, but he never looked like mounting an attack as he found his tyres overheated in the sliding understeer in the Mercedes' wake. "So, I just sat behind basically," Verstappen explained.

Bottas, having worked not to kill his softs early doors, held on for the duration, winning by 1.2s. Sainz also defied Perez's close attentions to the flag to take third.

Just two places further back came Hamilton, the world champion putting in a scintillating display from the back. His start was video-game-esque, jumping Nikita Mazepin off the line, then swerving to the outside and getting ahead of Mick Schumacher and both Williamses at Turn 1.

Having to check up to get around Kimi Raikkonen's spun Alfa Romeo, which had been tapped around by the other as Raikkonen and Antonio Giovinazzi went either side of Fernando Alonso squabbling over 11th at the Turn 1 apex at the start of lap two, stopped Hamilton double-passing Lance Stroll and Yuki Tsunoda. He'd trailed both running up the hill.

Tsunoda nipped ahead and held 14th for two laps before Hamilton's charge really started. After dispatching the AlphaTauri on the outside approach to Turn 1 on the fourth tour, he pulled off five DRS-aided passes at the same spot in 13 laps to reach seventh. Then he roared up to close a three-second gap to Leclerc, who was struggling with low tyre temperatures, shot past him into Turn 4 on lap 20, and then divebombed Lando Norris at Turn 1 on the final lap.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



Soft-shod Bottas takes control as Hamilton starts his burn from the stern

MAUGER

Hamilton in to take the hards that none of the Black Arrows or Red Bull drivers had tried so far during the weekend, but which were expected to be the key race rubber given their added resilience in hot temperatures. These peaked at 53C track and 24C air on Sunday – up from the sprint event’s peaks of 36C track and 16C air – and were a key factor in what eventually played out in front of a vocal Sao Paulo crowd.

Red Bull reacted to Mercedes’ stop immediately, pulling Verstappen in the next time by to go to the same compound and ward off Hamilton’s undercut threat. This wasn’t massively powerful but

“BOTTAS FUMED AT NOT BEING ALLOWED TO TRY RUNNING LONG: ‘SHOULD HAVE BEEN A ONE-STOP’”

couldn’t be ignored, even with Hamilton losing a small amount of time catching McLaren’s Daniel Ricciardo and passing him in the background as Verstappen left the pit exit. He’d still done damage, though, with Verstappen’s advantage trimmed to 1.6s.

At this stage the various charges were interrupted for a third time shortly after the leading pair’s first stops. The virtual safety car had already been activated once to allow further debris dropped at Turn 1 not long after the safety car restart, because Mick Schumacher had slid into Kimi Raikkonen’s Alfa Romeo and ripped off his front wing.



But it was required again so that debris on the pitstraight – from Stroll’s Aston Martin, still feeling the effects of the lunge that earned Tsunoda a 10s addition – could be removed on laps 30-31. Both periods were short and had little bearing on the race up front, other than allowing contenders and observers alike to catch their breath.

But the second VSC did have a particular bearing on the race behind Verstappen and Hamilton, since it allowed Bottas to take a cheap first stop for hard tyres – two laps after Perez had come in from a net third to take a green-flag service for the same rubber. The VSC timing got Bottas ahead of the second Red Bull, although he fumed at not being allowed to try running long. Even after the race he felt his strategy “should have been one-stop”. There was a chance, he believed, at “possibly being second”.

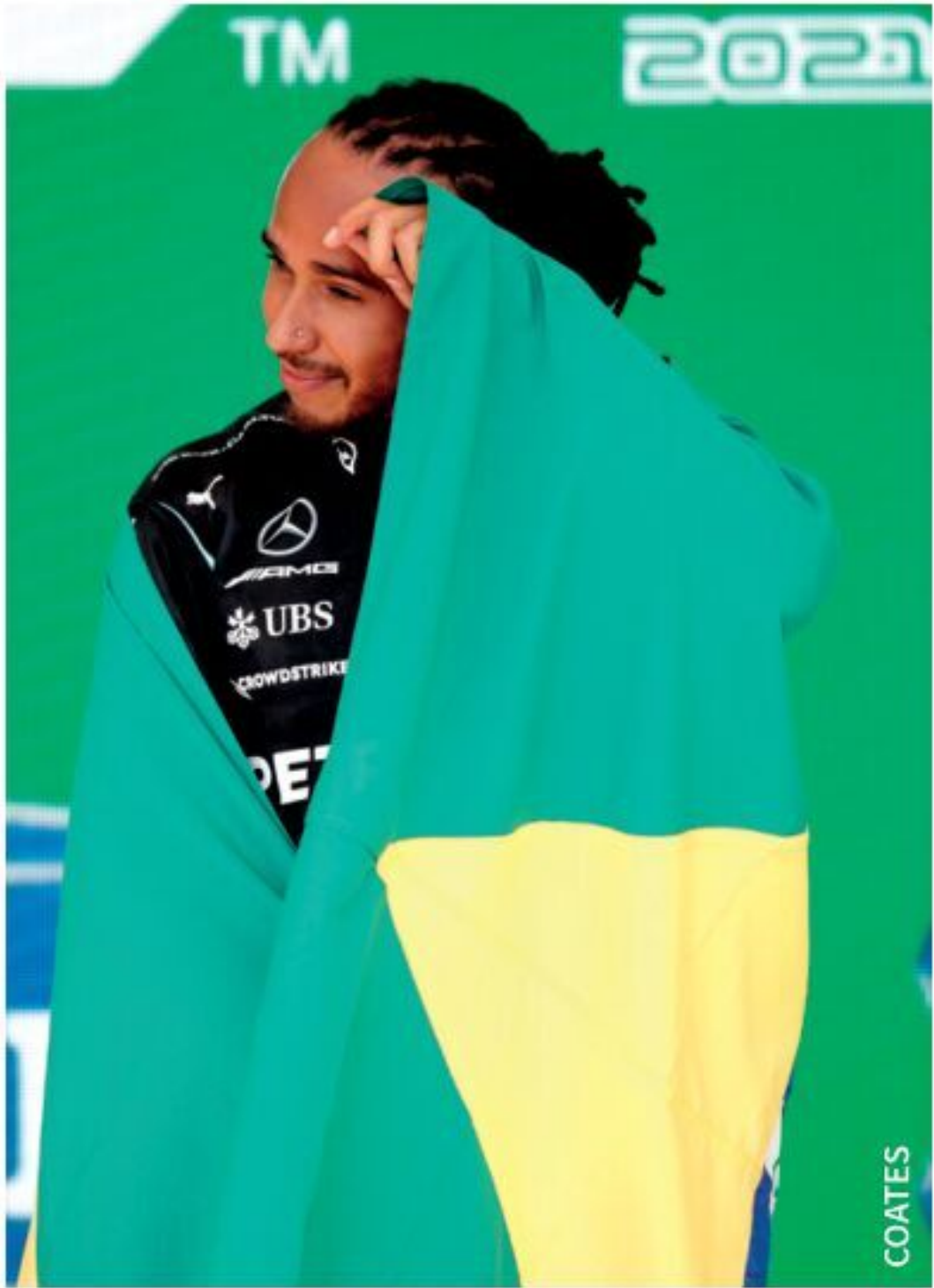
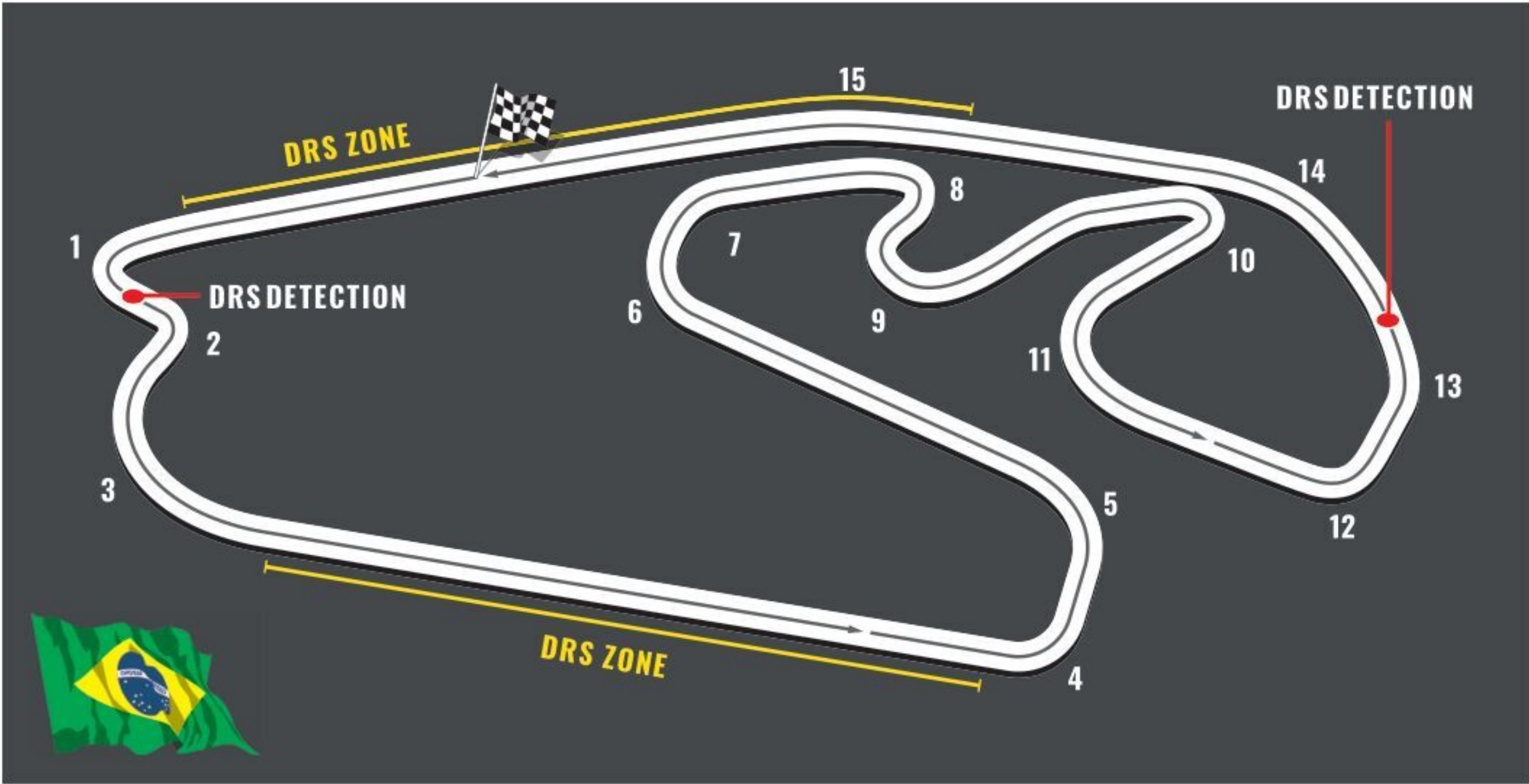
But the events played out as they did on the strategy front, and now it was all about Hamilton’s chances of capping a remarkable recovery from the very back of the sprint race grid with his 101st F1 win – largely depending on what happened next on the tactical front.

The gap between the leaders at the finish line never got above 1.4s over the 12 laps that followed Verstappen’s first-stop out-lap, but also did not come down past 0.9s as a brief stalemate played out.

Red Bull’s aggressive strategy call broke this, the team heeding Verstappen’s testy request to be the first driver to pit at the second round of stops and bringing him in for a second time at the end of the 40th tour.

Here, Mercedes had a decision to make, as its chief rival took a second set of new hards. “The option of going on an oddball >>

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strategy was discussed but wasn't that attractive because there is doubt, and if you get it wrong you cannot win the race," said Mercedes director of trackside engineering Andrew Shovlin, amusingly rudely, of trying a one-stopper. "We felt we had the car pace to really attack if we could get a bit of a tyre offset."

And so Mercedes waited until the end of the 43rd tour before calling Hamilton in to mirror Verstappen's strategy, albeit with a three-lap tyre life advantage. This left the world champion with 28 laps to catch and pass his fierce title rival.

A string of fastest laps in the low 1m12s and a personal best 1m11.982s from the three tours after Hamilton's out-lap eroded Verstappen's advantage to 0.6s by the end of the 46th tour. This was the first time Hamilton had been in DRS range, and that really put Verstappen under pressure. But a pass still looked tricky, as Hamilton said at this stage "he generally could match my pace".

The difficulty of passing would become clear on lap 48. Hamilton jinked towards Turn 1's inside. It was never going to result in a pass, but it forced Verstappen to react and head slightly off the racing line. This compromised his run down the rest of the Esses and onto the second straight, where Hamilton closed in with DRS and edged ahead as they braked for the fast, downhill left – the only spot on the circuit where track limits were being policed by the FIA.

But Verstappen wasn't done. He steamed back up on the inside line and thrust his nose to the apex to reclaim the lead – except in doing so his line took him wide on the exit and into the runoff, with Hamilton also off the road behind him.

This was the race's controversial moment, as the onboard replays



Sainz starred in the sprint,
then followed Leclerc home
in 5-6 finish the next day



“I’LL HAVE TO WATCH THE REPLAY, BUT IT’S HARD BATTLING AND I WOULDN’T EXPECT ANYTHING LESS”

did not show Verstappen’s steering movement and race director Michael Masi, who noted the incident but did not refer it to the stewards, said: “We have the overall ‘let them race’ principles, and looking at it all, with all of the angles that we had available, that philosophy was adopted.” Perhaps critically, in this officiating call, Masi was not able to access the front-facing camera images from Verstappen’s car until the race had ended.

“We both, of course, tried to be ahead into the corner,” Verstappen explained. “And so I braked a bit later to try and keep the position and the tyres were already a bit worn, so I was really on the edge of grip. That’s why I think I was already not fully on the apex, so then it’s a safer way of just running a bit wide there. In a way I was of course happy that the stewards decided that we could just keep on racing because I think the racing in general was really good.”

Hamilton’s assessment was diplomatic: “I think I was ahead initially, and I think he held his ground and we both ran out of road. Well, I think he was running out of road, so I obviously had to avoid [him] to go out of road – but I mean, I didn’t think too much of it. Obviously, I’ll have to watch the replay, but it’s hard battling and I wouldn’t expect anything less really. We didn’t touch wheels, which is good.”

Hamilton had another look at the same spot 10 laps later, but Verstappen’s better line through the preceding corners onto the straight and repeated weaving down it, which earned him a black/white flag warning from Masi, meant he had enough momentum to stay ahead by the Turn 4 braking zone. Not so on lap 59.

Here, Hamilton again moved late to the inside of Turn 1 and again Verstappen responded. The sequence played out in near-identical fashion to 11 laps earlier, except this time Hamilton swept ahead once he got just enough in front to seal the lead by the braking zone.

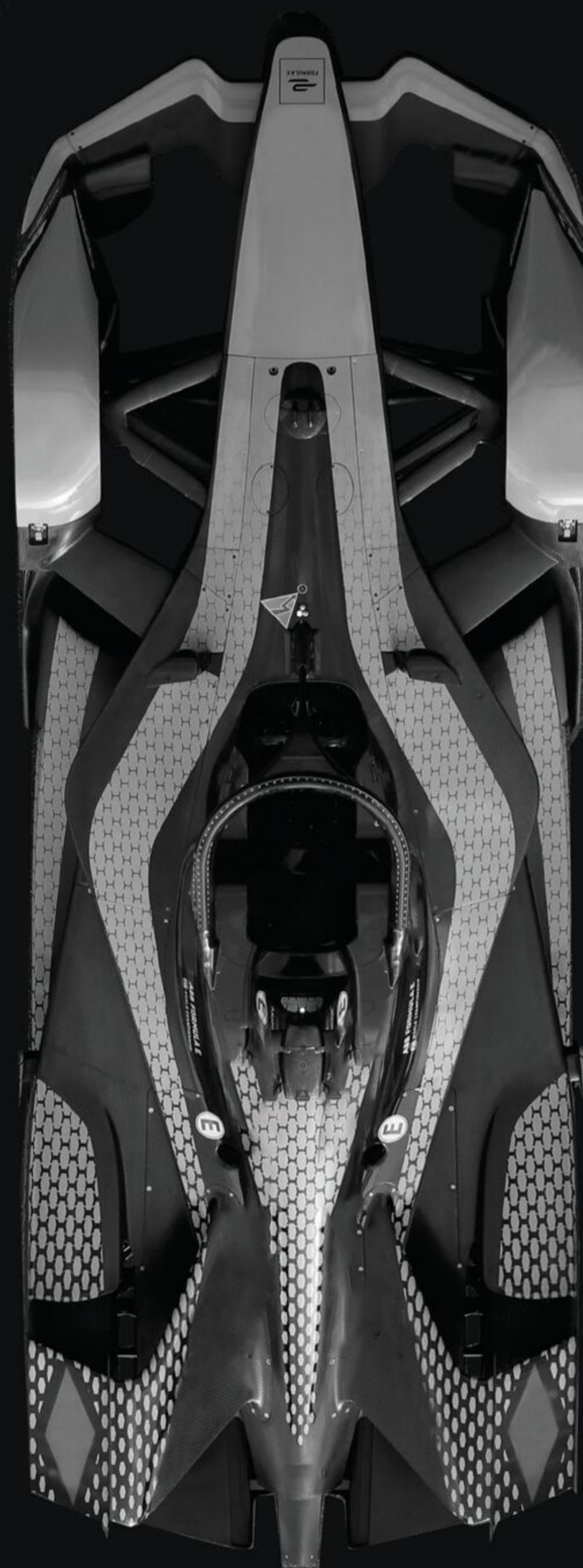
“I saw I had that experience and just made sure that I didn’t make that mistake again,” Hamilton said of his successful third passing attempt. “I was adamant and determined to get back into that position. It was fine. This is what a world championship battle should look like.”

Verstappen’s second set of hards were crying enough – something he’d been feeling “two laps before” Hamilton’s winning move was made, as he was “really starting to struggle on traction”. That meant Hamilton romped clear to win by 10.5s, with Bottas unable to catch >>

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With Verstappen's tyres on the wane, there was no denying Hamilton the lead

Verstappen despite being urged on by Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff.

Inevitably, there were late fastest-lap shenanigans, with Red Bull smartly pitting Perez on lap 69 as he had more than 30s in hand over Charles Leclerc and the closely following Carlos Sainz Jr. Armed with soft tyres, Perez pumped in a 1m11.010s on the final lap to deprive Hamilton of an extra point, the Briton's best lap stemming back to his early fliers just after his second stop.

"One of the most challenging, if not the most challenging, with the things that we've faced during the weekend," Hamilton reflected of his win. "But in terms of driving, I feel like it's maybe been my best..."

What made this result even more stunning was that Red Bull had entered the weekend as the firm favourite. It had won convincingly here in 2019 and had given Mercedes a drubbing the previous weekend in Mexico. Also, Hamilton had feared the hotter Sunday temperatures "potentially would be an Achilles' heel for us" since the W12 continues to struggle with rear-end stability. This had been good in the cooler sprint race, where Hamilton's excellent traction out of Turn 12, the track's last real corner heading uphill to the line, was a key factor in his succession of passes. And Red Bull has typically gone better in hot 2021 races, displaying better tyre degradation levels.

But that all got upturned last Sunday. There can be no doubt that Hamilton's fifth internal combustion unit gave him a performance boost. The freshness will have helped on the power front, but there is a suspicion that Mercedes could run it in a higher mode because there

"AT ONE POINT I JUST RAN OUT OF TYRES TO TRY AND DEFEND. BUT THAT'S HOW IT GOES"

are so few races remaining, with the part's high wear rate as its life goes on a key reason why Mercedes has churned through so many this year.

The engine boost, allied to the W12's inherent, low-rake drag advantage over the high-rake, downforce-laden RB16B meant Red Bull team boss Christian Horner felt his rival could have a "Monaco rear wing on here", which is perhaps what Hamilton referred to when he revealed "I chose to go a direction [on car arrangement] this weekend" that "worked really well" – although Mercedes remained tight-lipped over his explanation afterwards.

Whatever the combination that made the W12 the package to beat last weekend, it meant Hamilton could hurt Verstappen where Red Bull was strongest at Interlagos. That was the second sector, where "there are not that many corners but high degradation", said Verstappen, referring in particular to the rapid, double right of Turns 6-7 at the end of the second straight, and the downhill left-hand Turn 11 swoop at the end of the second sector. At these points, all the drivers had to take care not to stress their rubber.

"Straightline performance is very important on a track like this, and of course the deg is important too," said Verstappen, as unflappable as ever in defeat. "I had to get my time somewhere to try and match Lewis and that was of course through the middle sector where the corners mainly are. That meant that I had to use my tyres a bit more and at one point I just ran out of tyres to try and defend. But that's how it goes."

How it went at Interlagos was thrilling, fascinating and inspiring – much like the 2021 championship overall. A race for the ages in a season that matches. ❧



Hamilton and Bottas get a drenching after Interlagos thriller

NEXT F1 REPORT

QATAR GRAND PRIX 25 NOVEMBER ISSUE

There's no formbook to consult as Formula 1 heads to a new venue. Is momentum now back with Hamilton as he fights to close the points gap?

ALPINE TEAMWORK NOT ENOUGH TO DEFY GASLY

Alpine secured its biggest points haul since September's Russian Grand Prix to remain level with AlphaTauri in the fight for fifth in the 2021 Formula 1 constructors' standings.

Despite both Fernando Alonso and Esteban Ocon starting the sprint in the top 10, the Alpine duo had a mixed Saturday race with contrasting fortunes at the start. The Frenchman moved up and eventually finished ninth, while his experienced team-mate came home 12th.

Due to Lewis Hamilton's Grand Prix grid penalty, Ocon was promoted to eighth, where he would finish the race, directly ahead of Alonso. The pair swapped positions on the final lap after the Spaniard had earlier been waved through given his strong second-stint pace, which came after losing time not stopping under the virtual safety car.

Both Alpines were given the bold one-stop strategy, trying to keep back two-stopper Pierre Gasly, with Ocon and Alonso working together using the DRS to keep the AlphaTauri driver at bay. Gasly eventually got ahead of both Alpines with 10 laps to go, using his significant tyre life advantage to secure seventh.

"I said on the radio, 'Fernando could give me the DRS' to try and keep Gasly [behind]," Ocon explained. "We managed to keep Gasly behind for three or four laps. He would have passed us straight away if we didn't do any tactics like that."



Ferraris top midfield battle after Sainz stars in sprint

Ferrari duo Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz Jr beat Pierre Gasly to finish best of the rest in the Sao Paulo Grand Prix, with the Italian giant gaining 18 points on McLaren in the fight for third place in the Formula 1 constructors' championship.

Sainz had already secured Ferrari one of those points for finishing third in the sprint race after his soft tyre choice paid off handsomely, while Leclerc struggled to get his mediums into the optimum operating temperature and dropped behind Lando Norris. Sainz's strong start was key to his sprint race rise from fifth on the grid, which he said was down to recent "homework over the last few races to really try and nail them".

But he got away poorly in the Grand Prix, losing ground but no places after Norris moved over on him and picked up an immediate puncture on the run to Turn 1. There, Sainz stayed ahead of the fast-starting Leclerc, but was overtaken by his team-mate when Leclerc muscled his way to the inside down the second straight. Both Ferrari

drivers slid wide and through the Turn 4 runoff behind falling polesitter Valtteri Bottas and ahead of Gasly, who was soon under pressure from the rapidly rising Lewis Hamilton.

After the eventual winner blasted past the Ferrari pair on successive laps before the safety car period, they steadily pulled away from Gasly and ran a small chunk adrift of the lead fight. That increased across their medium-medium-hard two-stop strategy, but the Ferraris were never at risk losing their fifth and sixth places.

"The procedure was spot-on," Sainz said of his poor Grand Prix start. "I did exactly the same as I did in [the sprint]. And I did exactly what I had to do – I nailed the procedure. It should have been a good start, but we are analysing that there was possibly something strange in the clutch."

Gasly, who didn't have a working drinks system throughout the Grand Prix, made decisive passes on Sebastian Vettel and in particular the Alpines to ensure his fresher tyres on the two-stopper paid off.



BIG NUMBER

10

Lewis Hamilton's grid spot for the Sao Paulo Grand Prix – the lowest for a race winner in the world championship's history of visiting Brazil.



Tsunoda penalised for Stroll clash

Yuki Tsunoda was the only driver penalised in three crashes at Interlagos's first corner across the two races in Sao Paulo, with the AlphaTauri driver handed a 10-second addition for hitting Lance Stroll early in the Grand Prix.

The stewards found Tsunoda was "wholly at fault" for the third-lap clash and said he "braked too late in this optimistic manoeuvre". Tsunoda said his move "was risky", but argued "he was not looking in his mirror at all". Stroll later retired due to damage sustained in the crash.

At the same spot on lap two of the sprint, Kimi Raikkonen had spun after turning in on Alfa Romeo team-mate Antonio Giovinazzi. Eight laps after the Tsunoda/Stroll clash in the GP, Mick Schumacher hit Raikkonen, breaking the Haas's front wing.

In other penalty news, Lewis Hamilton received a €5000 fine for undoing his seat belts celebrating on the GP cooldown lap.

Tricky weekend for McLaren despite Norris's recovery

Lando Norris fought back from a first-lap puncture to finish 10th in Interlagos's main race, as McLaren lost further ground to Ferrari in the constructors' championship.

Norris gained places in the sprint to finish sixth, overtaking Pierre Gasly at the start and later pouncing on Charles Leclerc at Turn 1. That became fifth on the Grand Prix grid due to Lewis Hamilton's engine-change penalty.

Daniel Ricciardo had a tough sprint in the other MCL35M, losing places to Esteban Ocon and Sebastian Vettel at the start, and in Hamilton's charge up the order, to finish 11th stuck in the DRS train behind Gasly.

McLaren's fortunes did not improve in the main race. After Norris's fast start he pulled in front of Carlos Sainz Jr's Ferrari and the pair made glancing contact, the Briton suffering an immediate rear-left puncture. "If I want to go for it, I'm not just going to lift off and wave him back past, right?" he said defiantly afterwards.

Norris mustered a decent recovery from last to 10th, aided by the safety car cutting his deficit following his puncture pitstop, but only picked up a point due to Ricciardo retiring late on with an engine issue caused by a chassis crack. The Australian had enjoyed a much stronger main race.



Q&A

GEORGE RUSSELL WILLIAMS DRIVER

How did you get on in the Grand Prix?

It was a really tricky race until the last stint. We seem to really struggle when the tyres are degrading and you get in this [tyre] pick-up and it seems to affect the aerodynamics of the car quite a lot. Whenever we put new tyres on, the car feels like a completely transformed car and I managed to keep it all in the [performance temperature]



window in that last stint. But overall, I can't be too displeased with moving up four positions [from 17th on the grid to finish 13th] given how off the pace we've been this weekend.

You made an early stop on lap six. Was it worth it?

I don't think of it as good, don't think it was bad. It was one of those things where we had to do it to give us a shot to get into the points, but we were quite a

long way off the pace. And when we see what Kimi did on that last stint, that Alfa Romeo is looking really strong. So yeah, we need to give everything in the last few races because they could have easily picked up a number of points in these last few races. They're looking really strong at the moment.

Does Williams have a clear understanding of its struggles in Brazil?

We need to review it. Like I said [after the sprint], the wind direction definitely didn't help us.

And we've had experience with this in the past. Budapest was the biggest one when we have this 180 shift in wind – suddenly the car goes from feeling terrible to a really strong car and the pace follows it. So that's the biggest thing. Hopefully next week we just have some calm conditions.

What are your early impressions of the next race in Qatar?

I quite enjoy the track, to be honest. Very fast, sweeping, high downforce, long straight as well. I think there'll be some good racing.



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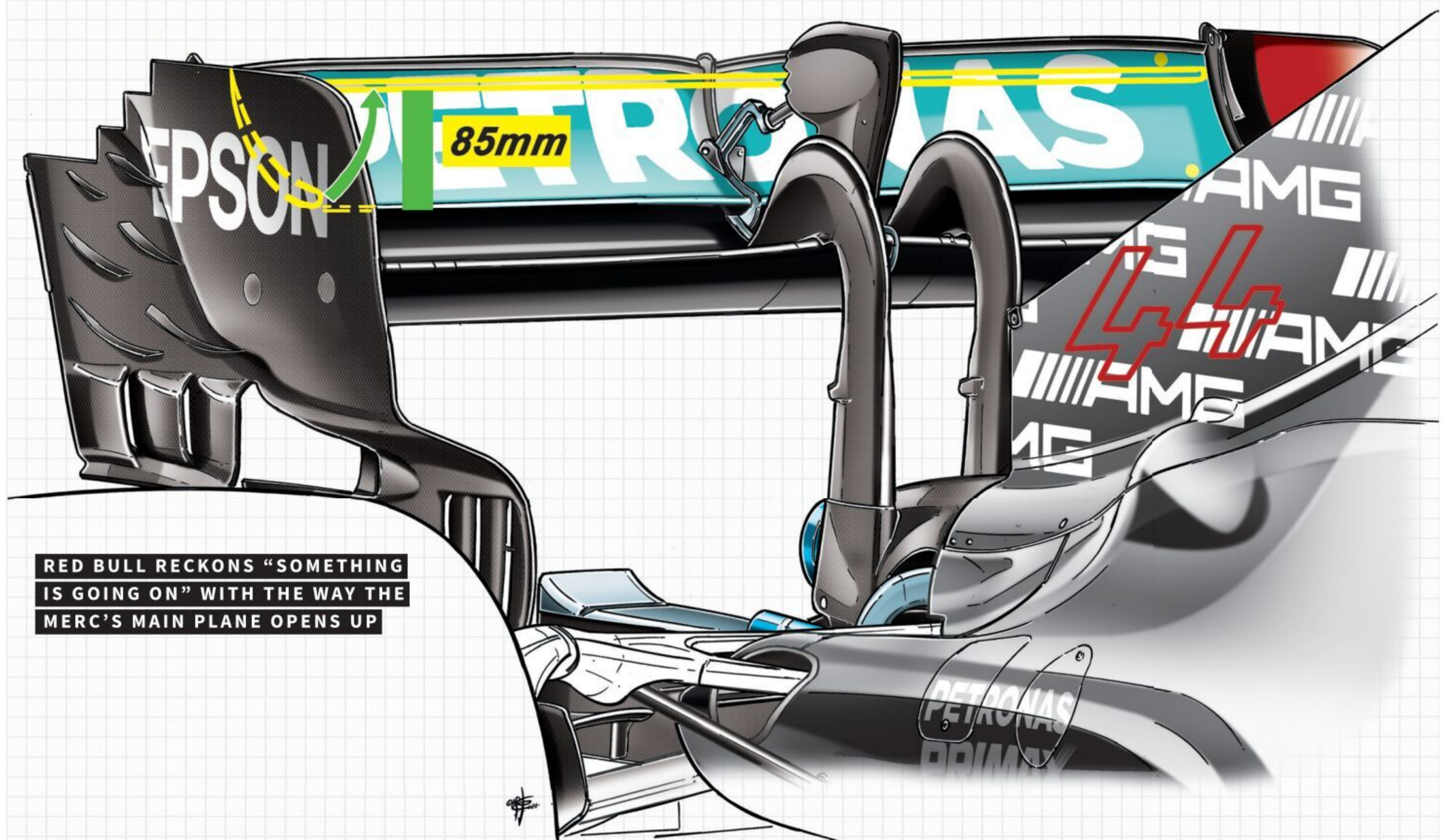


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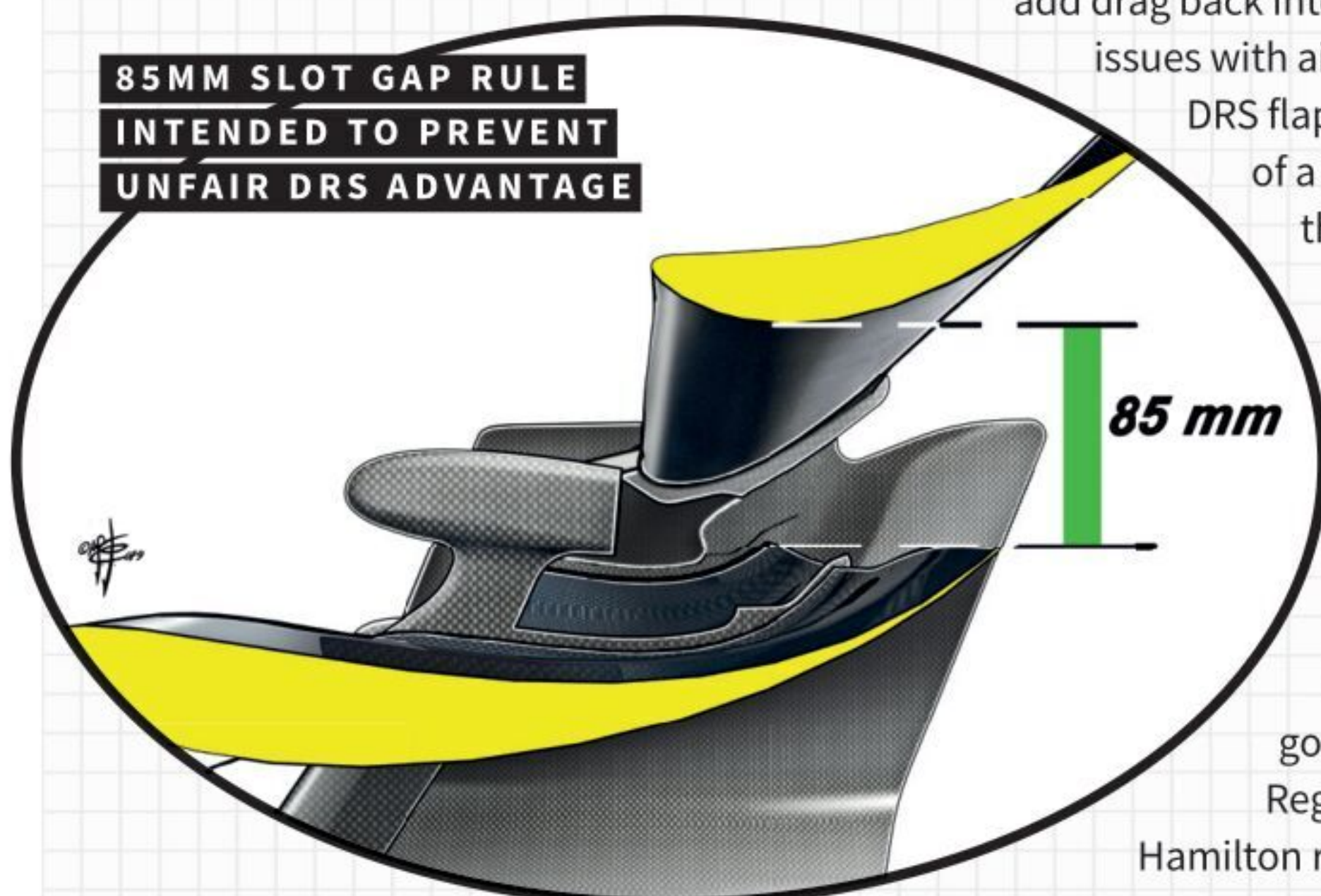
GIORGIO PIOLA



THE IMPACTS OF HAMILTON'S 'BIG' DRAG REDUCTION SYSTEM

Toto Wolff's assertion that Lewis Hamilton's rear wing had sustained damage, and thus failed the DRS slot gap examination, came with an explanation that the unequal slot gap would have created a performance disadvantage. Either way, the 0.2mm shift out of tolerance would have created an infinitesimal difference in the function of the wing, but the rules are binary – it's either within them or it isn't. However, the 85mm slot gap rule exists to ensure that teams do not derive an unfair advantage on DRS, because opening the wing further can result in even greater drag reduction.

**85MM SLOT GAP RULE
INTENDED TO PREVENT
UNFAIR DRS ADVANTAGE**



In a very simple drag force equation, we have the force equal to half of the product of the car's drag coefficient, its frontal area, the air density and the square of velocity. The frontal area (and to a lesser degree, the coefficient of drag) drop as the DRS opens, thus reducing the drag force. That results in less power needed to overcome that drag, allowing the maximum velocity to increase. In short, if your DRS opens up more than another car, you've got more speed at your disposal, if only a couple of extra miles per hour.*

But there are limits to this; if you open up the DRS too much, the upper flap can lift up past the point at which its frontal area is smallest and add drag back into the mix. It can also cause issues with air reattachment when the DRS flap is brought down at the end of a straight, which will mean that the driver initially has less downforce, potentially causing problems in slowing down for the corner. Either way, that practice is banned by the technical regulations – and there's now precedent for how stringent the rules governing the DRS are. Regardless, it's difficult to say that Hamilton really gained or lost anything

from his DRS being out-of-kilter, and nor was that the focal of Red Bull's suspicions about the geometry that Mercedes runs at the rear of the car. Max Verstappen explained after the sprint race that he felt that his rival's wing was flexing, despite the increased load tests that Formula 1 added at the French Grand Prix to stamp out the practice of tilting the wing back on the straights.

"We have our suspicions that something is going on there," said Verstappen. "You know, in the beginning of the year, we had to change our rear wings with the pillar, the back basically. So I think there's still something going on with the main plane that is opening up and giving them more top speed."

Although the Hamilton DRS incident was largely an open-and-shut case, Red Bull's other suspicions will only continue.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

*If you want the formula for that equation, it's this:

$$F_D = \frac{1}{2} \rho v^2 C_D A$$

F_D = drag
 ρ = density of fluid
 v = speed of the object relative to the fluid
 C_D = drag coefficient
 A = cross sectional area



FREE PRACTICE 1			FREE PRACTICE 2		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m09.050s	1	Alonso	1m11.238s
2	Verstappen	1m09.417s	2	Verstappen	1m12.102s
3	Perez	1m09.492s	3	Bottas	1m12.355s
4	Bottas	1m09.567s	4	Ocon	1m12.407s
5	Gasly	1m09.880s	5	Hamilton	1m12.741s
6	Sainz	1m10.124s	6	Perez	1m12.903s
7	Leclerc	1m10.142s	7	Giovinazzi	1m12.997s
8	Ocon	1m10.145s	8	Sainz	1m13.078s
9	Alonso	1m10.201s	9	Leclerc	1m13.099s
10	Stroll	1m10.352s	10	Raikkonen	1m13.355s
11	Tsunoda	1m10.374s	11	Stroll	1m13.426s
12	Vettel	1m10.413s	12	Ricciardo	1m13.448s
13	Raikkonen	1m10.443s	13	Norris	1m13.581s
14	Giovinazzi	1m10.587s	14	Gasly	1m13.608s
15	Norris	1m10.610s	15	Russell	1m13.615s
16	Schumacher	1m10.885s	16	Tsunoda	1m13.726s
17	Latifi	1m10.902s	17	Vettel	1m13.747s
18	Russell	1m10.938s	18	Latifi	1m14.025s
19	Ricciardo	1m10.990s	19	Schumacher	1m14.066s
20	Mazepin	1m11.342s	20	Mazepin	1m14.909s

WEATHER Sunny, air 17-18C track 33-35C

WEATHER Sunny, air 18-19C track 47-53C

QUALIFYING		
POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m08.372s
2	Bottas	1m08.469s
3	Perez	1m08.483s
4	Gasly	1m08.777s
5	Sainz	1m08.826s
6	Leclerc	1m08.960s
7	Norris	1m08.980s
8	Ricciardo	1m09.039s
9	Alonso	1m09.113s
EX	Hamilton	1m07.934s
QUALIFYING 2		
10	Ocon	1m09.189s
11	Vettel	1m09.399s
12	Tsunoda	1m09.483s
13	Raikkonen	1m09.503s
14	Giovinazzi	1m10.227s
QUALIFYING 1		
15	Stroll	1m09.663s
16	Latifi	1m09.897s
17	Russell	1m09.953s
18	Schumacher	1m10.329s
19	Mazepin	1m10.589s

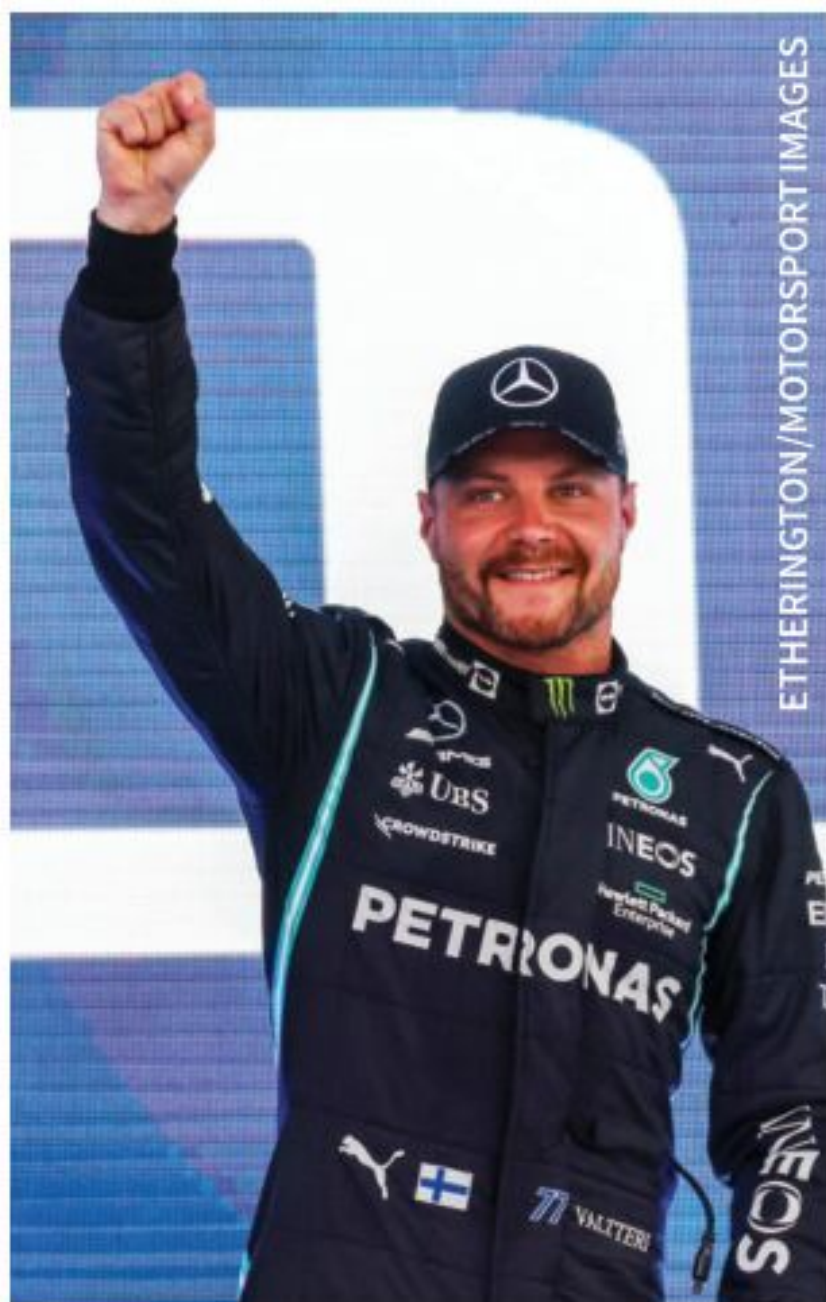
WEATHER Overcast, air 15-16C track 24-26C

SEASON STATS			
DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Verstappen	332.5	1	1
2 Hamilton	318.5	1	1
3 Bottas	203	1	1
4 Perez	178	1	2
5 Norris	151	2	1
6 Leclerc	148	2	1
7 Sainz	139.5	2	2
8 Ricciardo	105	1	4
9 Gasly	92	3	4
10 Alonso	62	4	6
11 Ocon	50	1	5
12 Vettel	42	2	5
13 Stroll	26	7	8
14 Tsunoda	20	6	7
15 Russell	16	2	2
16 Raikkonen	10	8	12
17 Latifi	7	7	12
18 Giovinazzi	1	10	7
19 Schumacher	0	12	14
20 Kubica	0	14	18
21 Mazepin	0	14	18

SPRINT RACE 24 LAPS - 64.22 MILES					
POS	DRIVER	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRE	FASTEST LAPS
1	Bottas	29m09.559s	24	Su	1m12.300s
2	Verstappen	+1.170s		Mn	1m12.114s
3	Sainz	+18.723s		Su	1m13.167s
4	Perez	+19.787s		Mn	1m13.110s
5	Hamilton	+20.872s		Mn	1m12.357s
6	Norris	+22.558s		Mn	1m12.994s
7	Leclerc	+25.056s		Mn	1m13.140s
8	Gasly	+34.158s		Su	1m13.342s
9	Ocon	+34.632s		Su	1m13.615s
10	Vettel	+34.867s		Mu	1m13.558s
11	Ricciardo	+35.869s		Mn	1m13.463s
12	Alonso	+36.578s		Mn	1m13.397s
13	Giovinazzi	+41.880s		Sn	1m13.627s
14	Stroll	+44.037s		Mu	1m13.666s
15	Tsunoda	+46.150s		Sn	1m13.747s
16	Latifi	+46.760s		Mn	1m13.934s
17	Russell	+47.739s		Mn	1m14.056s
18	Raikkonen	+50.014s		Sn	1m13.900s
19	Schumacher	+1m01.680s		Sn	1m14.387s
20	Mazepin	+1m07.474s		Sn	1m14.583s

WEATHER Sunny then overcast, air 16C track 32-36C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 132.148mph
FASTEST LAP Verstappen, 1m12.114s, 133.662mph



CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP		
1 Mercedes		521.5
2 Red Bull		510.5
3 Ferrari		287.5
4 McLaren		256
5 Alpine		112
6 AlphaTauri		112
7 Aston Martin		68
8 Williams		23
9 Alfa Romeo		11
10 Haas		0

QUALIFYING BATTLE			
Hamilton	13	5	Bottas
Perez	1	17	Verstappen
Ricciardo	6	12	Norris
Vettel	12	7	Stroll
Alonso	10	8	Ocon
Leclerc	12	6	Sainz
Gasly	18	0	Tsunoda
Raikkonen	6	11	Giovinazzi
Kubica	0	2	Giovinazzi
Mazepin	2	17	Schumacher
Latifi	1	17	Russell

Based on Q1/Q2/Q3 sessions, not sprint races. Events removed when one driver in a team could not record a representative time for reasons outside their control

WINS		POLE POSITIONS	
Verstappen	9	Verstappen	8
Hamilton	6	Hamilton	5
Bottas	1	Bottas	3
Ocon	1	Leclerc	2
Perez	1	Norris	1
Ricciardo	1		

Poles taken based on qualifying, not sprint races (official F1 scores would be Verstappen 9, Bottas 4, Hamilton 3)

STARTING GRID



RACE RESULTS ROUND 19/22 (71 LAPS - 190.06 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	1h32m22.851s	17	Mn, Hn, Hn
2	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda	+10.496s	51	Mn, Hn, Hn
3	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	+13.576s	3	Mn, Hn, Hn
4	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda	+39.940s		Mn, Hn, Hn, Su
5	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+49.517s		Mn, Mn, Hn
6	Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP)	Ferrari	+51.820s		Mn, Mn, Hn
7	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	AlphaTauri-Honda	-1 lap/+4.192s		Mn, Hn, Hn
8	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	-1 lap/+20.518s		Mn, Hn
9	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Alpine-Renault	-1 lap/+21.009s		Mn, Hn
10	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	-1 lap/+24.006s		Mn, Hn, Hn
11	Sebastian Vettel (DEU)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	-1 lap/+25.294s		Mu, Hu, Mu
12	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap/+31.088s		Mn, Hn, Mn
13	George Russell (GBR)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap/+58.088s		Mn, Hn, Hn
14	Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap/+1m00.562s		Mn, Hn, Mn
15	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda	-1 lap/+1m04.801s		Sn, Hn, Hn
16	Nicholas Latifi (CAN)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap/+1m08.812s		Mn, Hn, Hn
17	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	Haas-Ferrari	-2 laps/+35.218s		Mn, Hn
18	Mick Schumacher (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	-2 laps/+1m12.574s		Mn, Hn, Mn, Mu
R	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	49 laps-chassis		Mn, Hn
R	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	47 laps-accident damage		Mu, Hu

FASTEST LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Perez	1m11.010s	-	71
2	Hamilton	1m11.982s	+0.972s	46
3	Verstappen	1m12.486s	+1.476s	47
4	Bottas	1m12.526s	+1.516s	49
5	Raikkonen	1m12.621s	+1.611s	54
6	Sainz	1m12.710s	+1.700s	63
7	Leclerc	1m12.822s	+1.812s	61
8	Gasly	1m13.227s	+2.217s	53
9	Vettel	1m13.634s	+2.624s	69
10	Norris	1m13.761s	+2.751s	53
11	Schumacher	1m13.793s	+2.783s	66
12	Alonso	1m13.922s	+2.912s	37
13	Tsunoda	1m14.204s	+3.194s	62
14	Giovinazzi	1m14.227s	+3.217s	44
15	Russell	1m14.355s	+3.345s	45
16	Ocon	1m14.430s	+3.420s	48
17	Ricciardo	1m14.443s	+3.433s	40
18	Latifi	1m14.616s	+3.606s	57
19	Mazepin	1m14.954s	+3.944s	36
20	Stroll	1m15.344s	+4.334s	25

WEATHER Sunny, air 22-24C track 42-53C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 123.444mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 135.740mph

TYRES

KEY: H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft I - Intermediate W - Wet n - New set u - Used set



RACE BRIEFING

GRID PENALTIES

HAMILTON Required to start from back of sprint race grid due to technical infringement
HAMILTON Five-place penalty for GP grid for additional power unit elements used
RAIKKONEN Required to start

from the pitlane for GP - car modified while under parc ferme conditions

RACE PENALTIES

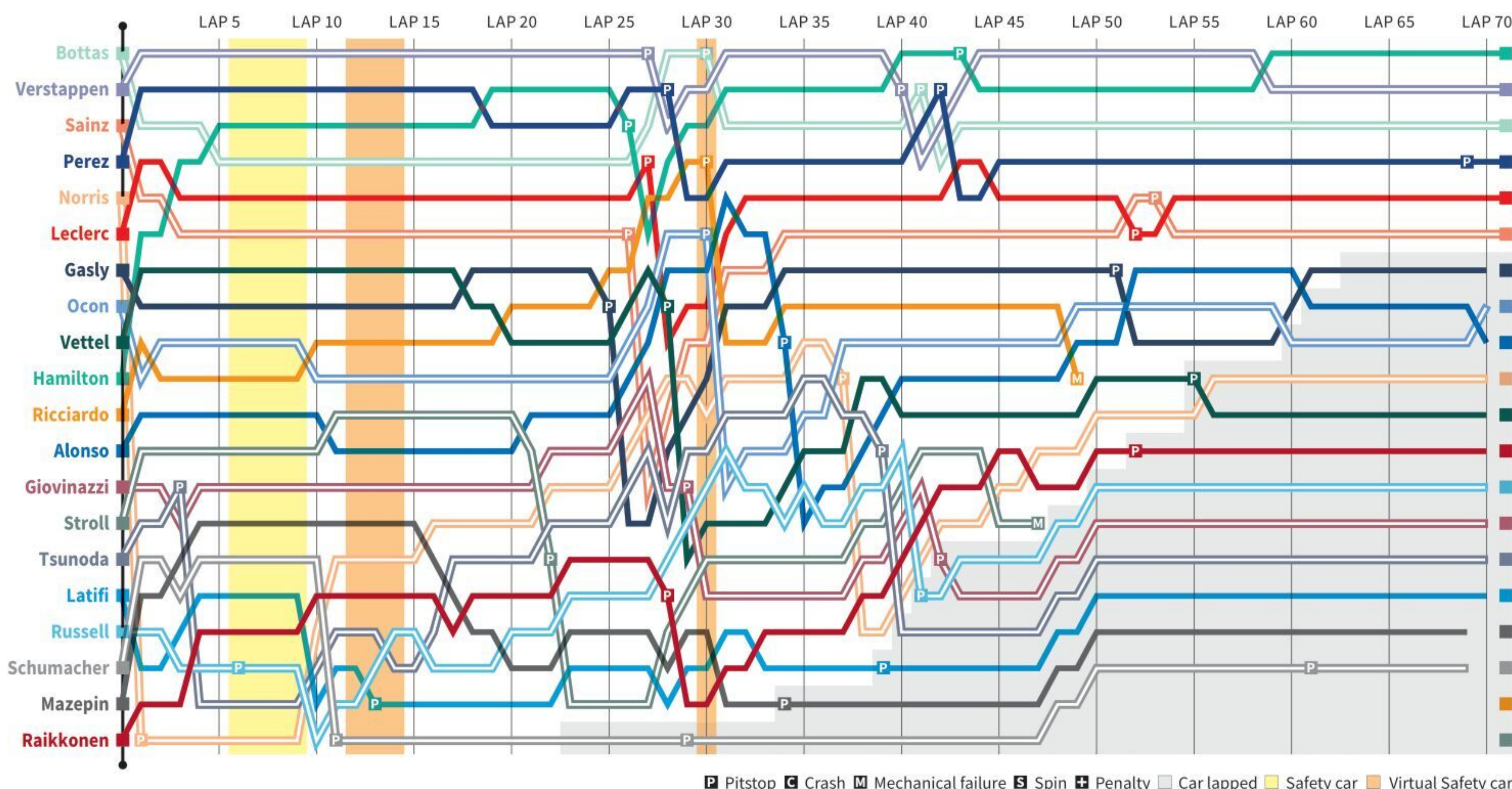
TSUNODA 10-second penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Stroll

STAT

80

Hamilton has now scored 80 F1 victories with Mercedes

LAP CHART What happened, when



BATTLING HAMILTON BAGS MAXIMUM POINTS IN BRAZIL

The world champion delivered a hugely impressive weekend performance topped off by his one of his greatest race victories, the 101st of his F1 career

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

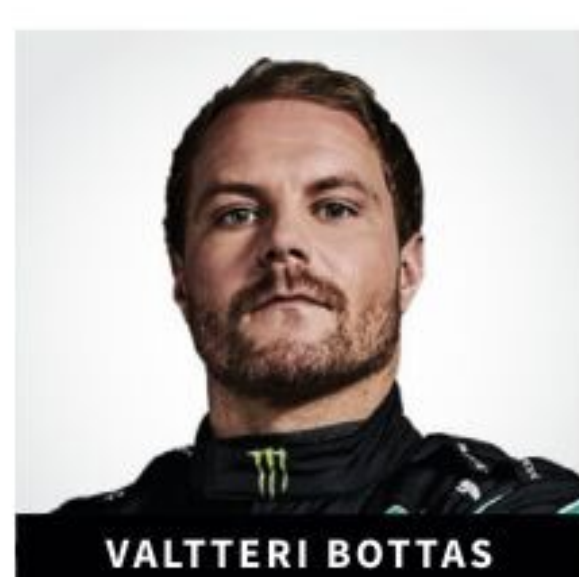
MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

Started **10th** — Result **1st**

10 Was no doubt boosted by his fresh ICE and topped qualifying, with a rear wing Mercedes claimed was broken, by a hefty 0.438 seconds before controversy struck. Gained 15 places in the sprint, nine in the GP, and was both rapid and kind to his tyres. Sealed a famous win.

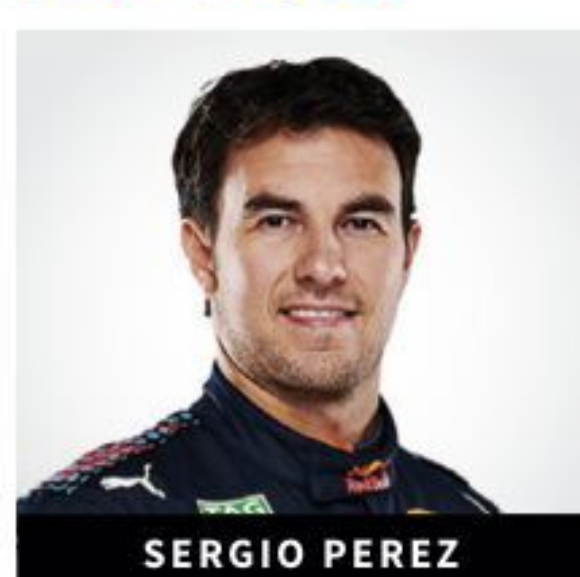


VALTTERI BOTTAS

Started **1st** — Result **3rd**

8 Gains here for the way he drove to keep soft tyres alive in the sprint, where balance of speed and tyre management was tough. Made a bad GP start but at least made a stand at Turn 1. Was fortunate stopping under the second VSC, and then didn't have the pace to trouble Verstappen.

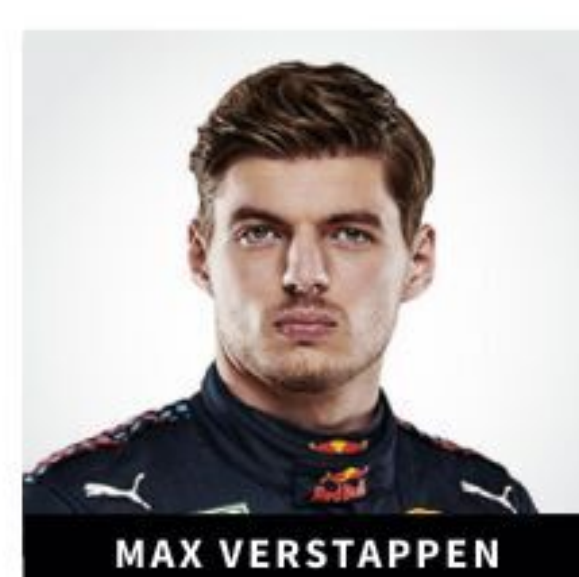
RED BULL



SERGIO PEREZ

Started **4th** — Result **4th**

6 Is marked down for the gaps to Verstappen across the weekend. It was the sprint where things really went wrong as couldn't get back past Sainz. Pounced on Bottas at the GP start and did well battling Hamilton while he could, then unlucky to stop just before second VSC.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

Started **2nd** — Result **2nd**

9 We can't blame him for his slow start in the sprint because he had a gear sync issue, but is fortunate the stewards didn't take a dimmer view of parc ferme faux pas and Turn 4 off-track defence against Hamilton. Scores lower for weaving and getting a black/white flag in their third-stint battle.

McLAREN



DANIEL RICCIARDO

Started **11th** — Result **19th**

7 Was the second McLaren in qualifying, then overpowered by Ocon and Vettel in the sprint's first corners. Reversed that in the GP and put in a nice pass on Ocon at Turn 4, with the Alpine then nipping back ahead after Hamilton's Turn 6 pass on Gasly. Was on for decent points before his DNF.

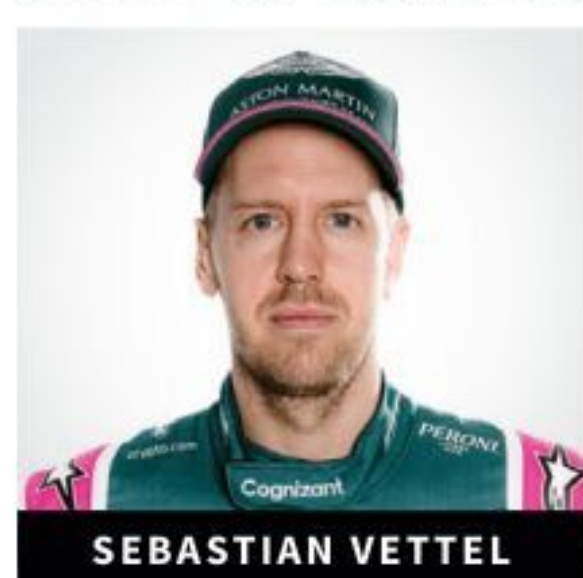


LANDO NORRIS

Started **5th** — Result **10th**

6 Pays for apparently minor misjudgement on Sainz's positioning at the GP start that led to contact and puncture. Still, did well to recover with damaged floor. In qualifying might have threatened Leclerc by hooking up best Q3 sectors, but did beat the Ferrari with fine sprint pass.

ASTON MARTIN



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

Started **9th** — Result **11th**

8 Qualified where Aston should have been, then made ground at both starts, able to hold ground against faster cars in sprint in DRS train behind Gasly. In GP was unlucky with VSC timing as that dropped him behind Ocon, and couldn't gain enough ground back against the Alpines and Norris on two-stopper.



LANCE STROLL

Started **14th** — Result **20th**

6 Q1 exit costs him here. In the sprint, couldn't make any ground until right at the end when he broke Tsunoda's long defence with a bold move at Turn 1. Was badly damaged in Tsunoda's GP lunge, but later battled well, including a great post-restart pass on Alonso outside Turn 1.

ALPINE



FERNANDO ALONSO

Started **12th** — Result **9th**

8 Made Q3 but dropped back with shocking sprint start, then got past Giovinazzi after the Alfas pincered him. Brilliant in the GP, producing such a strong second stint that he was ordered past Ocon and tried to keep one-stopping Alpines ahead of Gasly with DRS tactics. Graciously gave Ocon eighth back.



ESTEBAN OCON

Started **8th** — Result **8th**

7 Decent weekend overall, where difference in score to Alonso comes down to his Q2 exit and his GP second-stint pace versus what his team-mate delivered on hard tyres. Made excellent ground at the sprint start and held his position nicely on the softs, threatening Gasly late in that race.

FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

Started **6th** — Result **5th**

7 Scored down versus Sainz for two reasons: had he reproduced best sectors in Q3 he'd have qualified fifth; and opting to take mediums he couldn't get working in the sprint. Was forceful passing Sainz on GP lap one after a great start, but was fortunate that Sainz also slipped off the road behind.



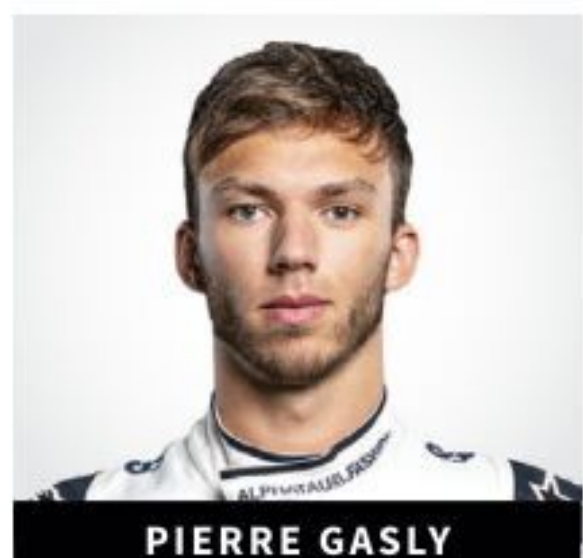
CARLOS SAINZ JR

Started **3rd** — Result **6th**

8 Couldn't beat Gasly in qualifying and ended up behind Leclerc in the GP, where they had an identical strategy and ran clear as a tandem once things settled down. But his high score comes mainly for his sprint race brilliance to fend off Perez and keep his soft tyres alive.

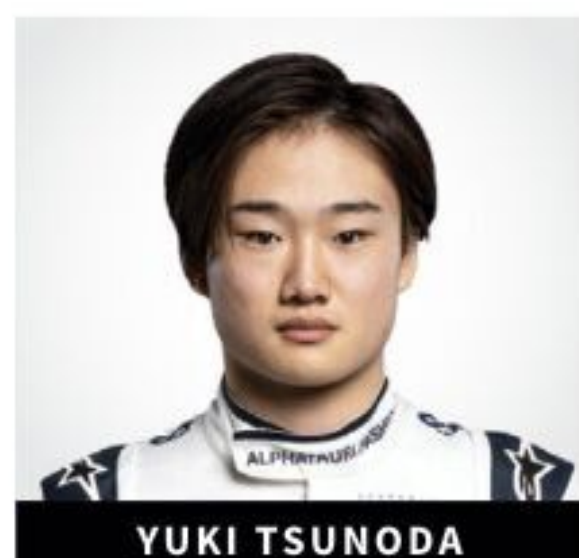


ALPHATAURI



Started 7th — Result 7th

7 Beat Ferraris in qualifying. Lost three spots at sprint start despite reacting well and being on the grippier tyres. Redeemed himself in the GP, making a dive on Vettel after falling behind the Aston with his lap-one runoff trip, then keeping his pace high late on to beat one-stopping Alpines.



Started 15th — Result 15th

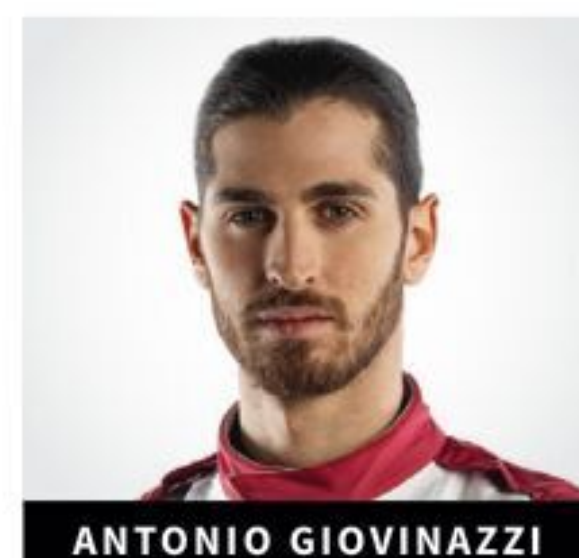
3 Can't score higher because overly ambitious GP move on Stroll went so badly wrong. Recovered some ground but still ended up well out of position. Also made a poor start to the sprint. Weekend high point was escaping Q1 on one set of softs, but failed to make Q3 when Gasly did.

ALFA ROMEO



Started 20th — Result 12th

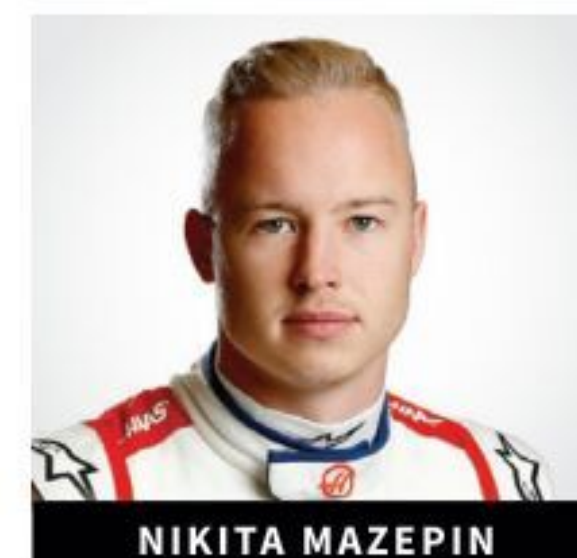
4 Was quicker Alfa in qualifying, but marked down for sprint clash with Giovinazzi as they overtook either side of Alonso, because it compromised the rest of his weekend. Charged well with an altered set-up from the pitlane and made good GP ground. Wasn't at fault for Schumacher clash.



Started 13th — Result 14th

5 Spoiled remaining fresh set of softs with Q2 lock-up, then in sprint remarkably endured brief contact with Tsunoda, nipping past Alonso afterwards. Blameless in Raikkonen crash, but his GP pace wasn't good when he emerged from stops behind slower rivals and was unable to pass them.

HAAS



Started 19th — Result 17th

6 Claimed trying too hard was behind slip in Q1 that meant he qualified last. In both races was slow off the line, then made no progress in the sprint, but on GP lap one he got stuck in with Russell and benefited from Latifi's off. Dropped back through the pack as you'd expect of a 2021 Haas.



Started 18th — Result 18th

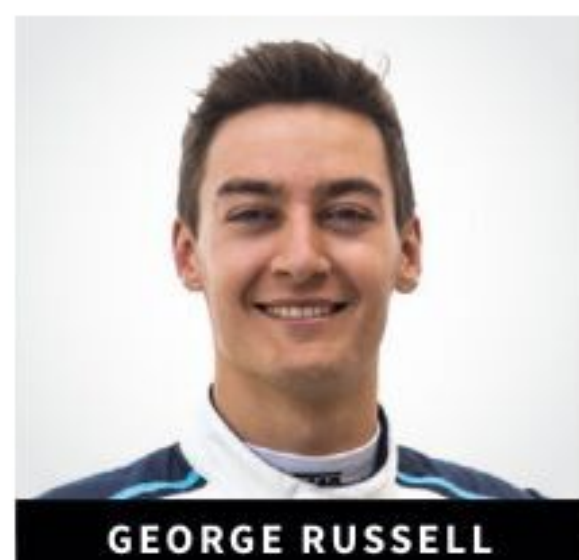
4 Beat Mazepin in regular battle at the back in Q1, where losing his best time to a track limits violation made no difference to position. Gained no net ground in the sprint but did at the start of the GP, before his slip as Raikkonen attacked after the safety car restart knocked off his wing.

WILLIAMS



Started 16th — Result 16th

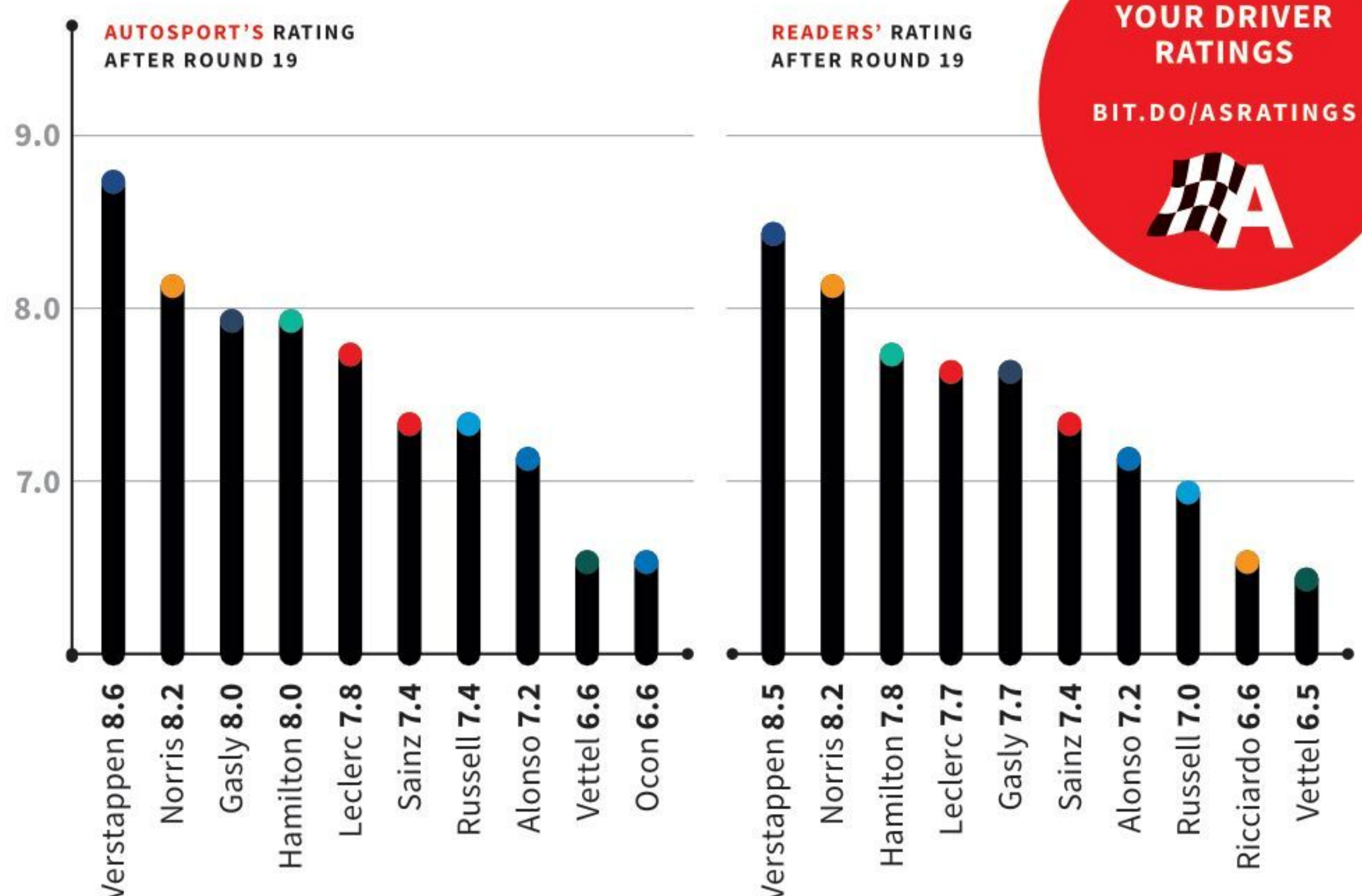
6 Is rewarded here for delivering in qualifying. Didn't make any net ground in the sprint and also had a poor GP start, locking up and sliding off at Turn 4. Wasn't as quick as Russell on a similar strategy, but was unfortunate not to have better timing in pitting as the first VSC ended.



Started 17th — Result 13th

6 Blamed gusts impacting car balance for disappointing qualifying, then couldn't make up any sprint ground. Made a poor GP start, then a lock-up gifted Latifi a place, after which he was soon pitted. Strong pace in third stint redeems his score as he recovered to beat a faster Alfa.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS



GIVE
YOUR DRIVER
RATINGS

BIT.DO/ASRATINGS

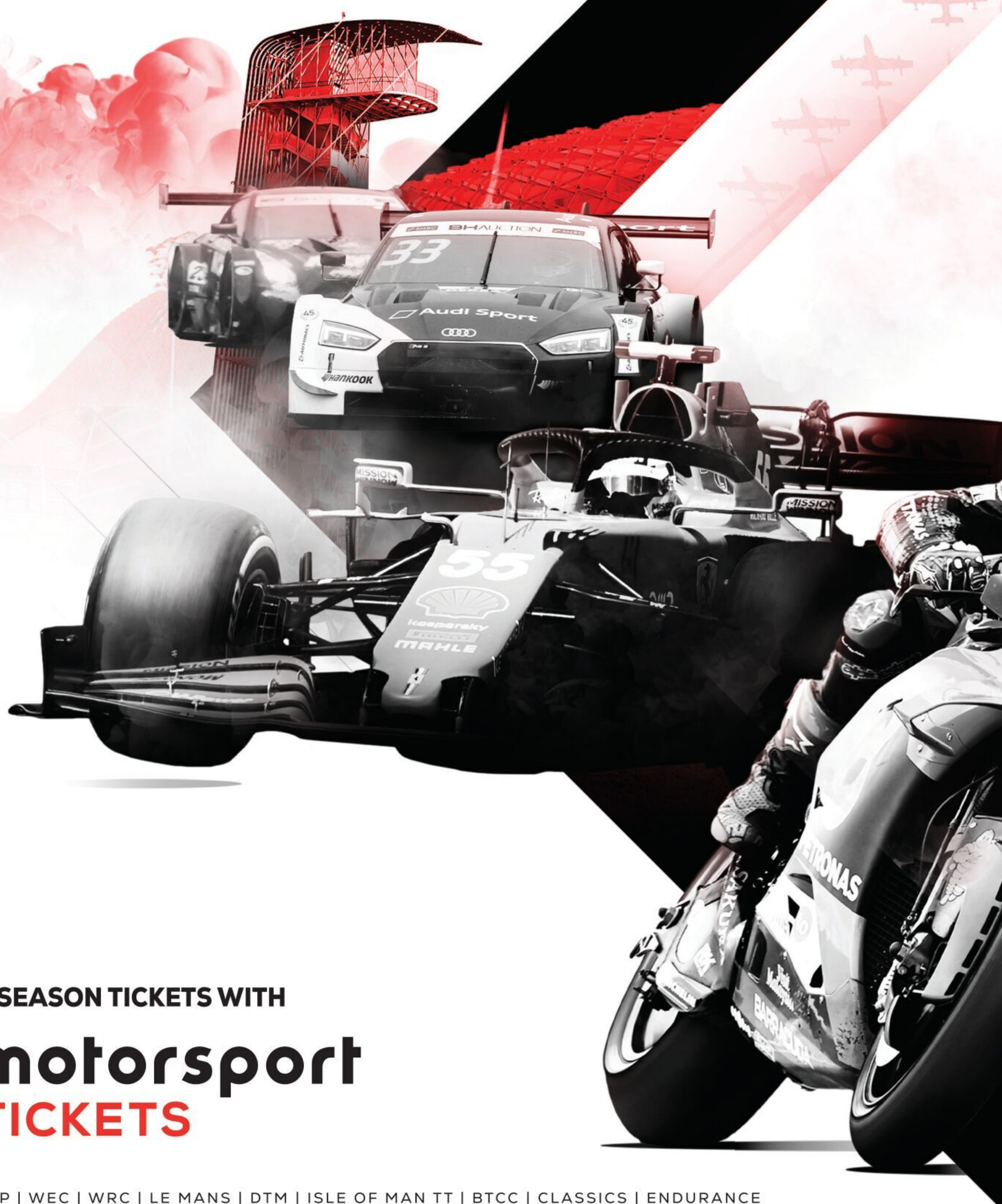


FOUR WHEELS OR TWO?

POWER OR ELECTRIC?

ROAD OR DIRT?

SPRINT OR ENDURANCE?



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Charging Tincknell gives Mazda farewell DPi win



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PETIT LE MANS IMSA SPORTSCAR ROUND 12/12 ROAD ATLANTA (USA) 13 NOVEMBER

A multitude of winners basked in glory after a dramatic conclusion to the action-packed 24th annual Petit Le Mans last Saturday evening at Road Atlanta. Mazda Motorsports claimed the biggest prize as Harry Tincknell completed a late pass on Felipe Nasr to claim the overall victory alongside fellow Englishman Oliver Jarvis and their endurance co-driver Jonathan Bomarito.

Meanwhile, Nasr capped his final drive in the Action Express Cadillac by securing the IMSA title for himself and fellow Brazilian Pipo Derani by the narrowest of margins over Wayne Taylor Racing Acura pairing Ricky Taylor and Filipe Albuquerque.

A measure of recompense for the WTR squad, which had led the standings since winning the opening round of the season – the Daytona 24 Hours in January – came with a third-place finish. That was enough to ensure the Endurance Cup crown for Taylor, Albuquerque and Alexander Rossi.

Pole position for Nasr, coupled to a disappointing sixth on the grid for Albuquerque, led to a simple formula on race day: whoever finished ahead of the other would win the championship. Nasr leapt into the lead at the start, but all seven DPi cars took a turn up front and each

looked like a legitimate contender for victory at one stage or another during an intriguing 10-hour contest. Almost constant traffic, with a field of 43 cars, contributed to a variety of incidents and no fewer than 10 full-course cautions, but the final two hours and 12 minutes were uninterrupted and led to a fitting climax to a tremendous season.

The Meyer-Shank Acura of Dane Cameron/Helio Castroneves/Juan Pablo Montoya led from what turned out to be the final restart after 303 laps, only to fall by the wayside due to floor damage after running over a piece of debris. Nasr passed Montoya for the lead on lap 332 and seemed in control until Tincknell emerged from the pack. His

charge was all the more remarkable since the Mazda had lost three laps due to a spark plug failure shortly after the three-hour mark. Fortunately, a series of cautions allied to canny strategy and some spirited driving brought their RT24-P back into contention.

The final pass came with 22 minutes left, when Tincknell glimpsed an opportunity amid traffic at Turn 7. Mindful that a second-place finish behind the Mazda would be enough to clinch the title, Nasr gave him enough room to complete the pass without contact. Tincknell then reeled off the final 20 laps to claim an emotional victory for the Mazda marque in its final DPi start.

Rather than cruise to the finish, Nasr not





Porsche triumphed over Corvette in twilight GTLM tussle



Aston team notched up third GTD win of the term

only kept the pressure on Tincknell, but also came under attack from Taylor, who, similarly, needed to finish second to win the championship. Taylor provided a thrilling denouement by making an optimistic late lunge to the inside of Turn 10 on the 410th and final lap. The Acura bounded through the gravel and across the grass to emerge ahead of the Cadillac, in which Mike Conway joined the two Brazilians, although Nasr had more momentum and was able to scythe the past again over the crest at Turn 11 and put the championship to bed.

The other Pro category, GTLM, ended with Porsche claiming a 1-2 finish, led by Cooper MacNeil/Mathieu Jaminet/Matt Campbell. Their cause was assisted when both Corvette C8.Rs fell by the wayside.

John Farano/Gabriel Aubry/James French (Tower Motorsport) took the LMP2 spoils after a post-race penalty for title winners Ben Keating/Mikkel Jensen and Scott Huffaker (PR1 Mathiasen Motorsports) for a last-lap clash between Jensen and Aubry.

Riley Motorsports continued its dominance in LMP3, where Gar Robinson teamed with Felipe Fraga and Scott Andrews to take the win, while a high attrition rate in GTD allowed Roman De Angelis/Ross Gunn/Ian James to score a third win for The Heart of Racing Aston Martin team. Zach Robichon and Laurens Vanthoor, joined by Lars Kern, clinched the championship by finishing second in the Pfaff Motorsports Porsche.

JEREMY SHAW

RESULTS ROUND 12/12, ROAD ATLANTA (USA), 13 OCTOBER (410 LAPS - 1041.4 MILES)



Cadillac squad (left) bagged crown as Mazda crew toasts Petit race win

OVERALL (410 LAPS)

POS	DRIVERS	CAR	TIME
1	Oliver Jarvis/Harry Tincknell/Jonathan Bomarito	Mazda RT24-P	10h00m38.581s
2	Felipe Nasr/Mike Conway/Pipo Derani	Cadillac DPi-V.R	+ 3.297s
3	Ricky Taylor/Filipe Albuquerque/Alexander Rossi	Acura ARX-05	+ 3.702s
4	Jimmie Johnson/Kamui Kobayashi/Simon Pagenaud	Cadillac DPi-V.R	+ 30.681s
5	Renger van der Zande/Earl Bamber/Scott Dixon	Cadillac DPi-V.R	-1 lap/20.081s
6	John Farano/Gabriel Aubry/James French	ORECA-Gibson 07	-3 laps/29.807s
7	Ben Keating/Mikkel Jensen/Scott Huffaker	ORECA-Gibson 07	-3 laps/1m05.198s
8	Steven Thomas/Tristan Nunez/Thomas Merrill	ORECA-Gibson 07	-4 laps/13.201s
9	Jim McGuire/Wayne Boyd/Guy Smith	ORECA-Gibson 07	-5 laps/39.201s
10	Dane Cameron/Helio Castroneves/Juan Pablo Montoya	Acura ARX-05	-11 laps/35.929s

GTLM (390 LAPS)

POS	DRIVERS	CAR	TIME
1	Cooper MacNeil/Mathieu Jaminet/Matt Campbell	Porsche 911 RSR	10h01m39.315s
2	Kevin Estre/Michael Christensen/Frederic Makowiecki	Porsche 911 RSR	+0.318s
3	John Edwards/Jesse Krohn/Augusto Farfus	BMW M8 GTE	-1 lap

GTD (378 LAPS)

POS	DRIVERS	CAR	TIME
1	Roman De Angelis/Ross Gunn/Ian James	Aston Martin Vantage GT3	10h01m34.593s
2	Zacharie Robichon/Laurens Vanthoor/Lars Kern	Porsche 911 GT3-R	+7.857s
3	Frankie Montecalvo/Zach Veatch/Robert Megennis	Porsche 911 GT3-R	-1 lap



Nasr bowed out with shrewd drive to second in polesitting Caddy



The Doctor has left the building: Rossi retires as protege Bagnaia wins

MOTOGP
VALENCIA (ESP)
14 NOVEMBER
ROUND 18/18

Even if the 2021 MotoGP title battle between Francesco Bagnaia and Fabio Quartararo had still been raging, the result at the front of the pack for last weekend's Valencia Grand Prix would still have been just a sidenote. The weekend belonged to one rider only.

After 27 laps of the Ricardo Tormo Circuit, Valentino Rossi's 432nd grand prix (including 125cc and 250cc outings) had come to an end – and with it, his illustrious 26-season career in world championship motorcycle competition. Winner of nine world titles – seven in the top class – and 115 GPs, Rossi has etched statistics into

the history books. They may be beaten one day but will never truly be matched when you consider the impact he has had on MotoGP and motorsport as a whole.

That fact was evident by the outpouring of support from past foes, current riders and stars from the wider sporting world – as well as from Hollywood – that came in over the Valencia round.

A true fairytale send-off was never on the cards. At many tracks this year Rossi has ridden faster than he ever has, but strong results have been hard to come by in the ultra-competitive modern era of MotoGP. Starting the Valencia weekend last after practice, a turnaround on Saturday sent him straight into Q2 and to 10th on the grid – courtesy of a tow by protege Bagnaia.

“Worried” coming into the weekend as he thought of how his final MotoGP outing

might feel, Rossi – now 42 – attacked the race with “the motivation like if I had to play for the championship”. Continuing to lap at a pace similar to those on the fringes of the podium, Rossi took the chequered flag in 10th to mass celebration from those around him.

For Rossi, he felt it was his best race of the season. And while the dream of ending his career with that elusive 200th premier class podium may have been far-fetched, in many ways he did get a proper send-off.

Having dropped to fourth from second on the grid off the line, Ducati's Bagnaia had some early work to do in the race. But he reached second on lap four and then the 2021 runner-up piled the pressure on polesitter and early leader Jorge Martin – who'd been unsure he could start having been up all night on Saturday vomiting.

The rookie's resolve was not easily broken, but on lap 15 Bagnaia found a way through up the inside of the Turn 6 left-hander. He immediately pulled out a gap of over four tenths, but Pramac's Martin would put in a handful of tours that reeled in his factory Ducati counterpart. However, Bagnaia perfectly managed the race once in the lead to head Ducati's first 1-2-3 from Martin and Jack Miller.

Sporting a 2004 retro Rossi helmet, Bagnaia felt his fourth win of the year was a perfect gift for his mentor. It was also perfect vindication for why Rossi backed the Italian over the years through his VR46 Academy.





Martin made rostrum despite illness



Rins binned another shot at the top three

Joan Mir ended his unsuccessful title defence disappointed that front tyre issues dropped him away from the Ducatis after a racy start. That disappointment extended to team-mate Alex Rins, who again crashed out while in a podium-contending position.

Fourth at the chequered flag, Mir headed new world champion Quartararo at the end of a difficult weekend for the Yamaha star. More troublingly for him, Ducati locking out the top three in qualifying and the race at a track that isn't conventionally suited to the Desmosedici has rung alarm bells looking towards 2022.

Pramac's Johann Zarco, KTM's Brad Binder, Avintia's Enea Bastianini and Aprilia's Aleix Espargaro slotted in between Yamaha's future in Quartararo and its past in Rossi to fill out the top 10 spots.

Vision problems from a concussion ahead of the Algarve GP meant one of Rossi's rivals in Marc Marquez wasn't present for his farewell. And Honda watched on at the first race since Assen 1992 without its factory team represented as Pol Espargaro was withdrawn after a violent FP3 crash.

The future that MotoGP has been pondering for the past two decades has now become a reality. The Valentino Rossi era has passed. But his legacy is in safe hands with the likes of Bagnaia – now surely a true title contender in the premier class – while MotoGP itself faces a prosperous future with a talent pool on its current grid all largely inspired by the Italian legend.

LEWIS DUNCAN

RESULTS ROUND 18/18, VALENCIA (ESP), 14 NOVEMBER (27 LAPS – 67.192 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Ducati	41m15.481s
2	Jorge Martin (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	+0.489s
3	Jack Miller (AUS)	Ducati	+0.823s
4	Joan Mir (ESP)	Suzuki	+5.214s
5	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Yamaha	+5.439s
6	Johann Zarco (FRA)	Pramac Ducati	+6.993s
7	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	+8.437s
8	Enea Bastianini (ITA)	Avintia Ducati	+10.933s
9	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	+12.651s
10	Valentino Rossi (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha SRT	+13.468s
11	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha SRT	+14.085s
12	Andrea Dovizioso (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha SRT	+16.534s
13	Alex Marquez (ESP)	LCR Honda	+17.059s
14	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	KTM	+18.221s
15	Iker Lecuona (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	+19.233s
16	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Aprilia	+19.815s
17	Luca Marini (ITA)	Avintia Ducati	+28.860s
18	Danilo Petrucci (ITA)	Tech3 KTM	+32.169s
R	Alex Rins (ESP)	Suzuki	10 laps-accident
R	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	4 laps-accident
W	Pol Espargaro (ESP)	Honda	FP3 crash/injury

Winner's average speed 97.714mph. Fastest lap Bagnaia 1m31.042s, 98.404mph.

QUALIFYING 2 1 Martin 1m29.936s; 2 Bagnaia 1m30.000s; 3 Miller 1m30.325s; 4 Mir 1m30.395s; 5 Zarco 1m30.418s; 6 Rins 1m30.475s; 7 Binder 1m30.509s; 8 Quartararo 1m30.620s; 9 Nakagami 1m30.644s; 10 Rossi 1m30.746s; 11 Morbidelli 1m30.781s; 12 A Espargaro 1m31.024s.

QUALIFYING 1 1 Rins 1m30.673s; 2 Binder 1m30.788s; 3 Dovizioso 1m30.859s; 4 Vinales 1m30.991s; 5 Lecuona 1m30.994s; 6 Petrucci 1m31.045s; 7 Marini 1m31.073s; 8 Bastianini 1m31.185s; 9 A Marquez 1m31.251s; 10 Oliveira 1m31.319s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Quartararo 278; 2 Bagnaia 252; 3 Mir 208; 4 Miller 181; 5 Zarco 173; 6 Binder 151; 7 Marc Marquez 142; 8 A Espargaro 120; 9 Martin 111; 10 Vinales 106; 11 Bastianini 102; 12 P Espargaro 100; 13 Rins 99; 14 Oliveira 94; 15 Nakagami 76; 16 A Marquez 70; 17 Morbidelli 47; 18 Rossi 44; 19 Marini 41; 20 Lecuona 39; 21 Petrucci 37; 22 Stefan Bradl 14; 23 Michele Pirro 12; 24 Dovizioso 12; 25 Dani Pedrosa 6; 26 Lorenzo Savadori 4; 27 Tito Rabat 1; 28 Cal Crutchlow 0; 29 Garrett Gerloff 0; 30 Jake Dixon 0.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Ducati 357; 2 Yamaha 309; 3 Suzuki 240; 4 Honda 214; 5 KTM 205; 6 Aprilia 121.



WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2

VALENCIA (ESP)

Raul Fernandez
Ajo Motorsport
(Kalex)

MOTO3

VALENCIA (ESP)

Xavier Artigas (below)
Leopard Racing
(Honda)



2021 MOTOGP SEASON REVIEW 2 DECEMBER ISSUE

We explore how Fabio Quartararo bagged the title glory and kept Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia at bay. Plus, Autosport's verdict on the top 10 riders of the 2021 campaign.



YOUNG DRIVER AWARD BACK WITH A BANG

The Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award seeks to find Britain's best rising single-seater star. Here's how the 2021 finalists were put through their paces

KEVIN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES

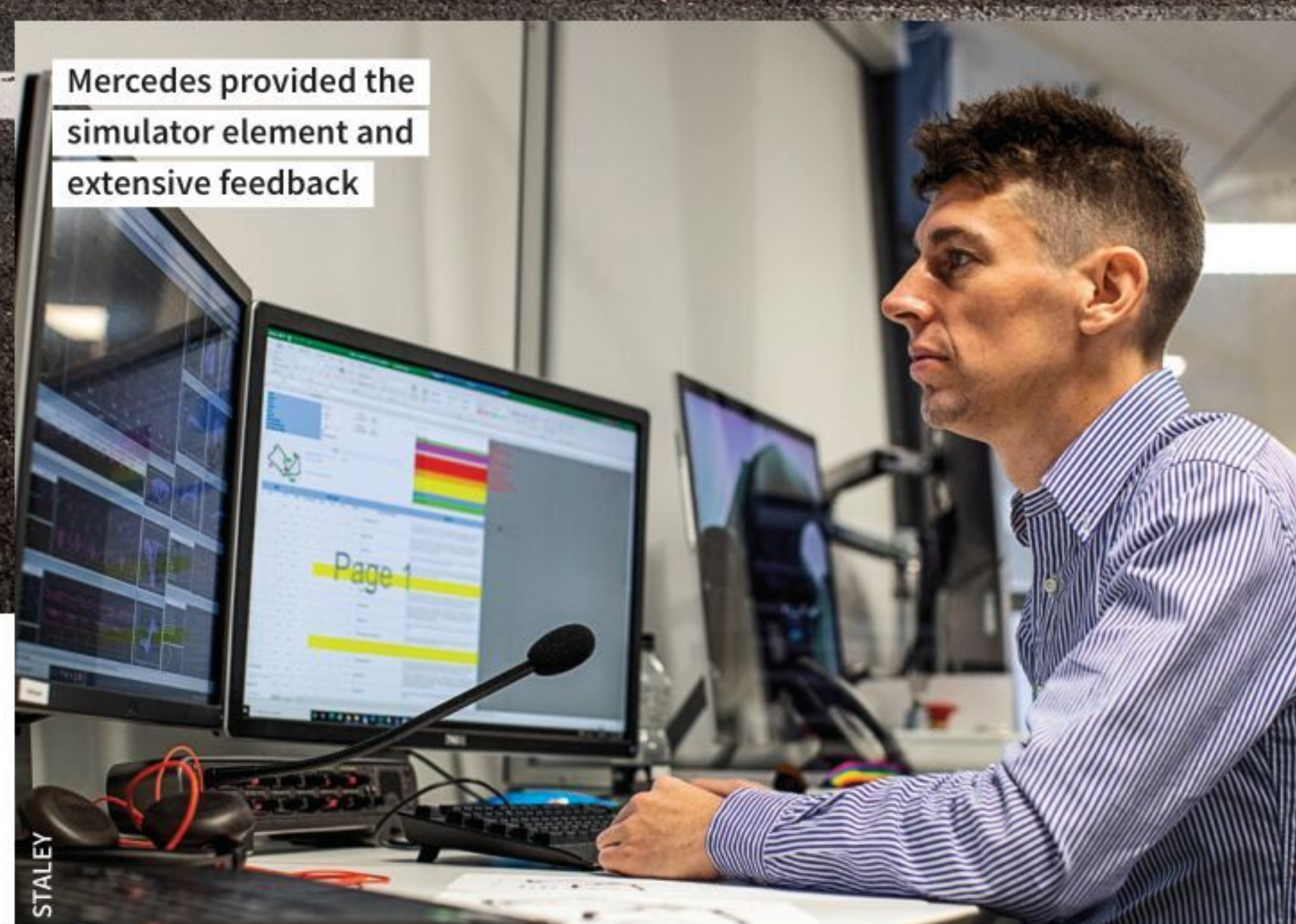
It's back. After a year in hibernation thanks to you-know-what, the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award burst back into life for 2021. Four young British racers and a new guest judge helped to make this year's contest, which kicked off last month, one of the best yet.

The details of the process get tweaked each year, but the overall structure is well established. The selected four, who have to be under 24 at the start of the calendar year and be an FIA Formula 3 rookie or compete in a lower level, conduct fitness and simulator tests before the two-day running on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit. There

they spend half a day driving GT3 and LMP3 machinery and the rest of the time with their own MotorSport Vision-run F2 car and engineer (selected at random). This year's chosen ones were Italian and German F4 champion Ollie Bearman, FIA F3 racer Jonny Edgar, Euroformula Open runner-up Louis Foster and GB3 champion Zak O'Sullivan.

Having all the finalists on-track in the same single-seater at the same time has been a key strength of the Award since 2010. "You can tell it's got into a good rhythm," says 1992 Award winner and three-time Indianapolis 500 victor Dario Franchitti, this year's guest judge. "It's been developed to the same formula with the same team and it works well."





“HAVING ALL THE FINALISTS ON-TRACK IN THE SAME SINGLE-SEATER AT THE SAME TIME IS A KEY STRENGTH OF THE AWARD”

“The data analysis and timing from TSL is strong too. As a group we can see it develop in real time. Having the F2 cars — four on track at the same time so you don’t have to worry about changeable conditions — is a gamechanger. That’s powerful.”

This year the Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 Team provided the pre-Silverstone simulator tests, which included 40 laps in the Mercedes W12 on the GP layout. The drivers were assessed on pace, consistency, feedback, approach and attitude. Reports were then provided to the judging panel. It was a similar story with the fitness tests, organised by Athletic Thinking. Each of the teenagers was put through their paces in terms of strength and cardiovascular performance. As well

as providing assessment information, the simulator and fitness elements also help with feedback, which is offered to all the finalists — win or lose — the following January.

Then it’s off to Silverstone. This year the first morning was largely spent in the Garage 59-run Aston Martin Vantage GT3 and BBM Sport Ginetta LMP3 cars. Following sighting laps in Aston Martin road cars and a brief shakedown in the F2s, benchmark drivers Jonny Adam and Charlie Robertson (see panel, p41) set times in the GT3 and LMP3 respectively. Each finalist then had two runs on old rubber in each car, before a final effort on new Pirellis. The finalists were allowed to see the data from the benchmark driver — and to get their advice — but weren’t allowed to see each other’s times.

Then it was back to the F2 cars. After another five-lap run on old tyres and a debrief, the quartet then had two five-lap runs on new rubber, with the aim being to set the fastest single lap time across the session.

“The reason we’ve historically done five-lap runs is to give as much seat time as possible for them to get used to the in-car tools, >>

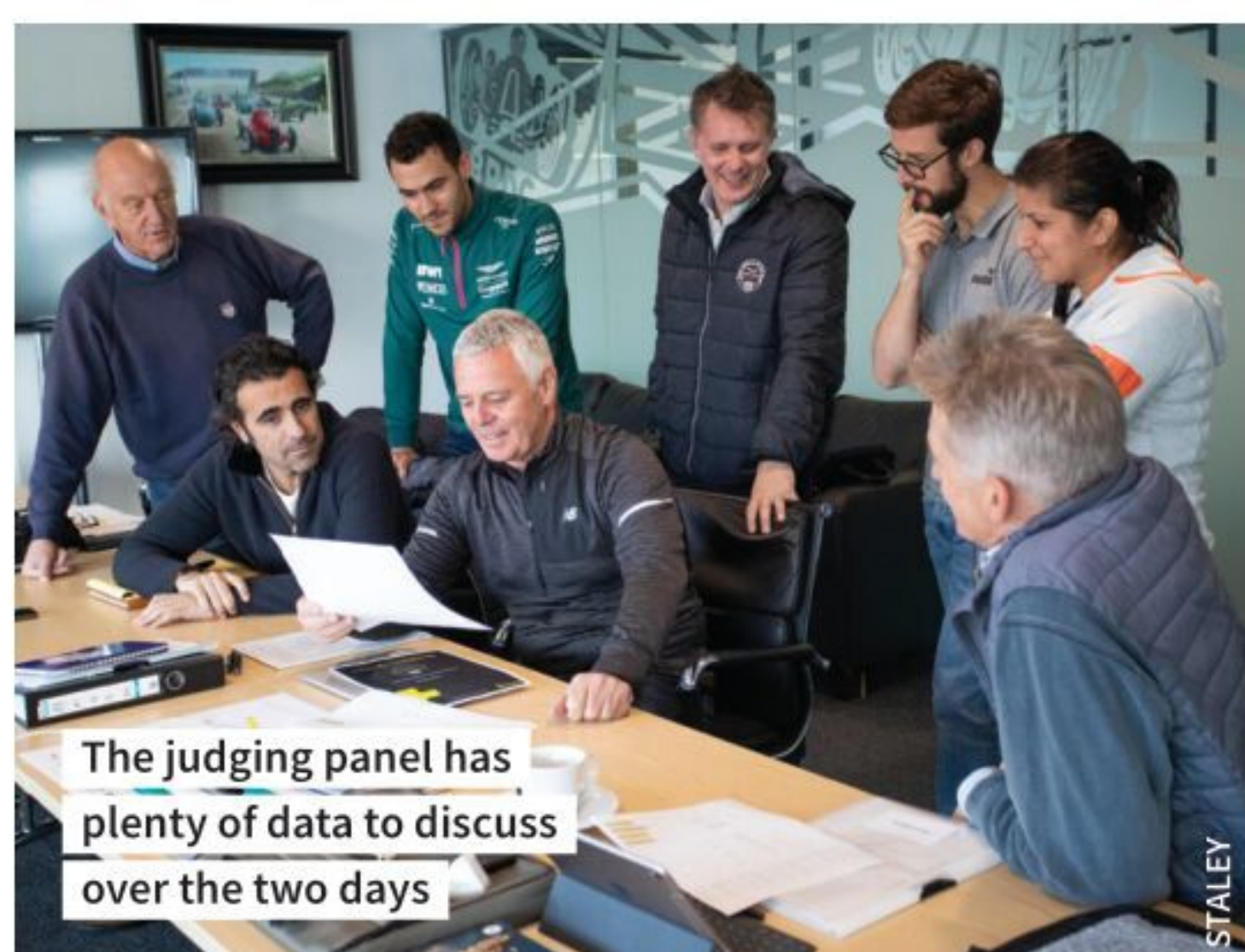


Finalists all hit the track together in F2 cars...

STALEY



...but share the solo GT3 Aston Martin



The judging panel has plenty of data to discuss over the two days

STALEY



FERRARO

THE 2021 FINALISTS

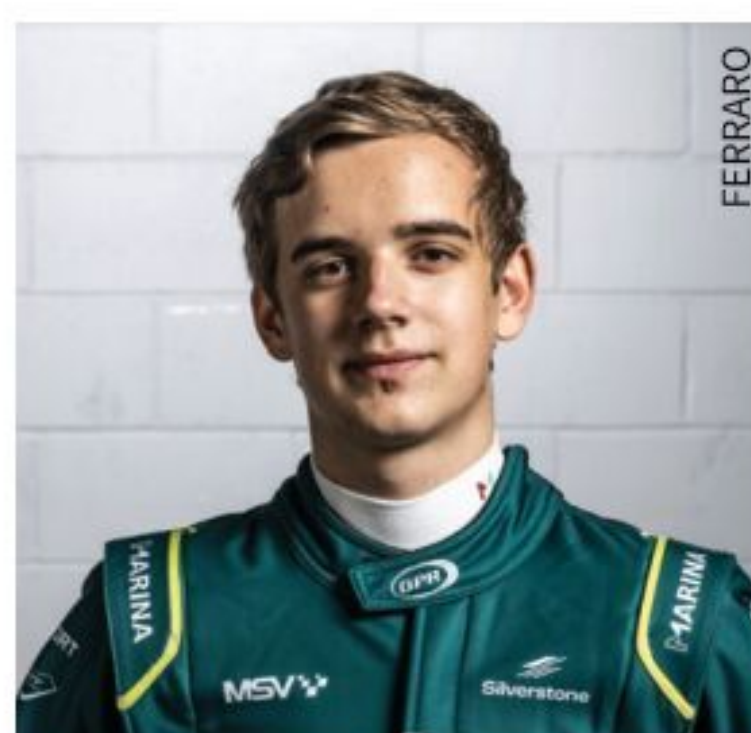


FERRARO

OLLIE BEARMAN

AGE 16

2021 Italian and German F4 champion with Van Amersfoort



FERRARO

JONNY EDGAR

AGE 17

2021 18th in FIA F3 (rookie season) with Carlin

THE 2021 CARS

As has become tradition, the finalists are tested across three different motorsport disciplines at Silverstone. "Three cars give them more race car experience than they are likely to get on their own," says Mark Williams. "And if it's close, three cars give us more ways to differentiate. I'm looking for who produces the ultimate lap time the most across all the cars – and be most consistent in the pursuit."

WILLIAMS JPH1B

ENGINE 1.8-litre turbo R4

POWER 425bhp

SILVERSTONE LAP TIME 1m45s-1m48s

THE 2021 JUDGING PANEL

Ex-Formula 1 driver and 1992 world sportscar champion Derek Warwick is the chairman of the judging panel. This year's panel also included Award winners Darren Turner, Andrew Kirkaldy and Alexander Sims, successful Lola and McLaren designer Mark Williams, Le Mans-winning engineer Leena Gade, leading commentator Ian Titchmarsh and Autosport Chief Editor Kevin Turner. Four-time IndyCar champion Dario Franchitti was the guest judge.

the front wing and front bar adjustment, and how the tyres change over the run," explains judge and former McLaren designer/engineer Mark Williams. "I expect people to be trying stuff early on, and the laps be all over the place, but not in the later sessions."

At the end of the day, the Garage 59, BBM Sport and MSV teams reported back to the judges, who had spent time talking to the drivers, viewing around the circuit and assessing lap times.

Some drivers come out in a different frame of mind for day two, which is spent in the F2 cars. The first outing this year was a seven-lap run on old tyres, to give the drivers an idea of tyre degradation ahead of the afternoon's 'pursuit run'. Another five-lapper then preceded a new element for 2021: fresh tyres were bolted on for two one-lap runs. "We've gone for a one-lap format this year because we want them to focus on delivering on one lap," says Williams.

"Tyres are at their best for one lap."

"The Award throws up good challenges to the drivers and I like that we changed it up for day two," adds Franchitti. "I like challenging the drivers. They're teenagers but they're experienced racing drivers and it's good to put them in at the deep end."

There was then another five-lap run on new tyres before the 'pursuit'. The drivers were set off at intervals so that they couldn't trip over (or race!) each other, given an out-lap and one tour to prepare, then started a 12-lap run with the aim of doing the shortest 'race' time. No laps to back off and cool the tyres, no scope for errors – it's a test of consistency and dealing with the rubber going off.

"I want to see fast, consistent laps," says Williams. "And see the people who can use the in-car adjustments to manage the tyres and get the overall shortest time. Going as fast as you can and using the in-car



**ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE GT3****ENGINE** Four-litre turbo V8**POWER** Over 500bhp**SILVERSTONE GP LAP TIME** 1m58s-2m01s**HOW TO BE QUICK AT SILVERSTONE****By Aston Martin benchmark driver Jonny Adam**

"Silverstone is a good circuit for us because there are a lot of high-speed corners. It's about using the downforce without inducing too much understeer. It's easy to get the shape of the braking wrong. The car is pretty compliant to drive and the resurfacing at Silverstone has helped.

"The Pirelli is really good, but there's a knack to getting the peak of the tyre. The rear is traditionally really strong early on, so it's important to get the tyre preparation right so the fronts are in too. The temperatures drop as soon as they come out of the oven, though they do stabilise.

"We've got two types of traction control, one to help out of slow corners and one to help with yaw, even at high speed. You need to be working with it but not too much. Don't abuse it. ABS is the same. It's there to help you but your braking has to be right to make the most of it.

"It's awesome what Aston Martin, Garage 59 and all the partners are doing. To give four talented individuals an opportunity like this, and the prize on offer, is amazing. With the three different cars – GT, LMP and single-seater – you've got three very different career options."

**GINETTA G61-LT-P3****ENGINE** Naturally aspirated 5.6-litre V8**POWER** 455-470bhp**SILVERSTONE GP LAP TIME** 1m52s-1m55s**HOW TO BE QUICK AT SILVERSTONE****By Ginetta benchmark driver and 2013 finalist Charlie Robertson**

"The important thing in the LMP3 is keeping the minimum speed up in the high-speed corners. Keeping the downforce on the car is crucial to lap time. It should not be too much of a change to the F3 and Euroformula drivers. It's a roofed single-seater with wheelarches.

"Then it's case of getting used to the 470bhp under your right foot. They do have traction control but you need to minimise it – there's a point where it starts to slow you down. It's a long throttle pedal so you can modulate it quite a lot.

"All the drivers asked the right questions, were polite and professional. The preparation they go into for this event is huge and it shows. They've been on it and it's great to see.

"It's great to be back. When you're a finalist it's so secretive and a high-pressure environment. I enjoyed it when I did it – it's one of those experiences that I still look back on and get the photos out and think it's awesome."

THE 2021 FINALISTS**LOUIS FOSTER****AGE** 18**2021** Runner-up in Euroformula Open with CryptoTower**ZAK O'SULLIVAN****AGE** 16**2021** GB3 champion with Carlin**"AFTER 30 YEARS THE AWARD STILL GIVES THE DRIVERS A BOOST AND IT'S GREAT TO SEE IT IN SUCH GOOD HEALTH"**

adjustments to balance the car as the tyres wear is the best way of doing it. And not making mistakes. We can't do a race because it would be too crazy and this is the closest way to simulate a race. We can't test for racecraft, but the finalists have been successful in their year so you assume they can pass people."

After the final runs each driver was interviewed by the judges, there was more F2 feedback from lead engineer James Goodfield, and then the judges were left to their deliberations after one of

the closest contests in recent years...

"I'm very impressed with all four, in and out of the car," says Franchitti. "I was very interested to watch them work with their engineers and dissect a new car. With Ganassi [in IndyCar], working with the drivers there, we use a lot of the same tools and it's good to see where the finalists were strong and weak compared to the drivers I usually work with.

"After 30 years the Award still gives the drivers a boost and it's great to see it in such good health. It's really fun."

It will be even more fun for the driver who scoops, among other things, £200,000, full British Racing Drivers' Club membership and an Arai helmet. But, like everyone else, they'll have to wait until 19 December at the Autosport Awards to find out who will follow in the footsteps of David Coulthard, Jenson Button, George Russell, Lando Norris and the other 27 previous Award winners. ❧



Four Award hopefuls were put to the test in a Ginetta-Nissan LMP3 from the BBM Sport stable



Le Mans 2007 in Lola B06/10 AER shared with Evans and Owen



Mercedes C11, here at Le Mans in 2014, was a winner



LMES crown won in 2005 in a Lola-AER B05/40

Bob's full house

BBM Sport was born when boss Bob Berridge found his workshop was running out of room

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**

A cramped workshop provided the catalyst for the creation of one of the UK's leading historic sportscar operations.

When Bob Berridge and his guys at Chamberlain-Synergy Motorsport started having to shuffle cars around — like “one of those Chinese magic puzzles”, he says — to get to the one they needed to work on, it was clearly time for a change. New premises, new partners, a new name and a new outlook quickly followed.

The operation has been called BBM Sport, after the initials of the three partners involved, since the start of 2019. Berridge invited long-time employee and latterly technical chief Steve Briggs and former Peugeot LMP1 driver and old friend Nicolas Minassian to join the management. BBM is now based in workshops in Daventry that were formerly the home of the Fortec single-seater team. The change of mentality since the Chamberlain-Synergy days means BBM is now a much more focused business. “It was a case of a new building and a fresh start,” says Briggs, who started working for Berridge straight out of school in 2002. “That meant it was time to change the name, too.”

Chamberlain-Synergy was launched for the 2004 season when Berridge ran TVR Tuscan T400R GT2 cars at the Le Mans 24 Hours and in the inaugural season of what was then called the Le Mans Endurance Series. The team was, explains Berridge, a vehicle for him and long-time driving partner Gareth Evans to compete at the highest level in sportscars. It derived its name from backer the Synergy Group, Evans's medical company, and stalwart Le Mans entrant Hugh Chamberlain, who was sporting

director and a crucial interface with Le Mans organiser the Automobile Club de l'Ouest.

“In those days, Le Mans was much more of an invitation race than it is today,” explains Berridge. “Hugh had first gone to Le Mans as a team owner in 1987 and he'd had an involvement every year since, so he was



Shaun Lynn pilots a Peugeot 908 at 2021 Silverstone Classic

“It was a case of a new building and a fresh start. And time to change the name”

well known to the ACO. But Chamberlain-Synergy was a hobbyist business based at home in a 4000sq ft workshop at the bottom of my garden. It was really about me and Gareth going racing.”

They did that with some success. After a switch to the prototype ranks for 2005, Berridge, Evans and Peter Owen won the LMES LMP2 title aboard a Lola-AER B05/40. That was followed by a move into the LMP1 ranks with the B06/10 with which they finished joint second in the renamed LMS in 2006.

The business remained about Berridge and Evans going racing after it turned away from contemporary motorsport for 2008. The team switched to historics, an arena with which Berridge was well acquainted after a hat-trick of titles in the Thoroughbred Grand Prix Championship (now the FIA Historic F1 Championship) in the 1990s. The Lola was swapped for a Mercedes-Benz C11 and the LMS for Historic Group C/GTP Racing events.

The successes of Berridge and Evans with the C11 and then an earlier Sauber-Mercedes C9 — including a victory for the former in the Le Mans Legends race supporting the 24 Hours in 2012 — led to a greater involvement in the historic Group C scene. A Jaguar XJR-14 3.5-litre car, a Lancia LC2 and a Peugeot 905 Evo 1 bis were among the cars to pass through its increasingly crowded workshops.

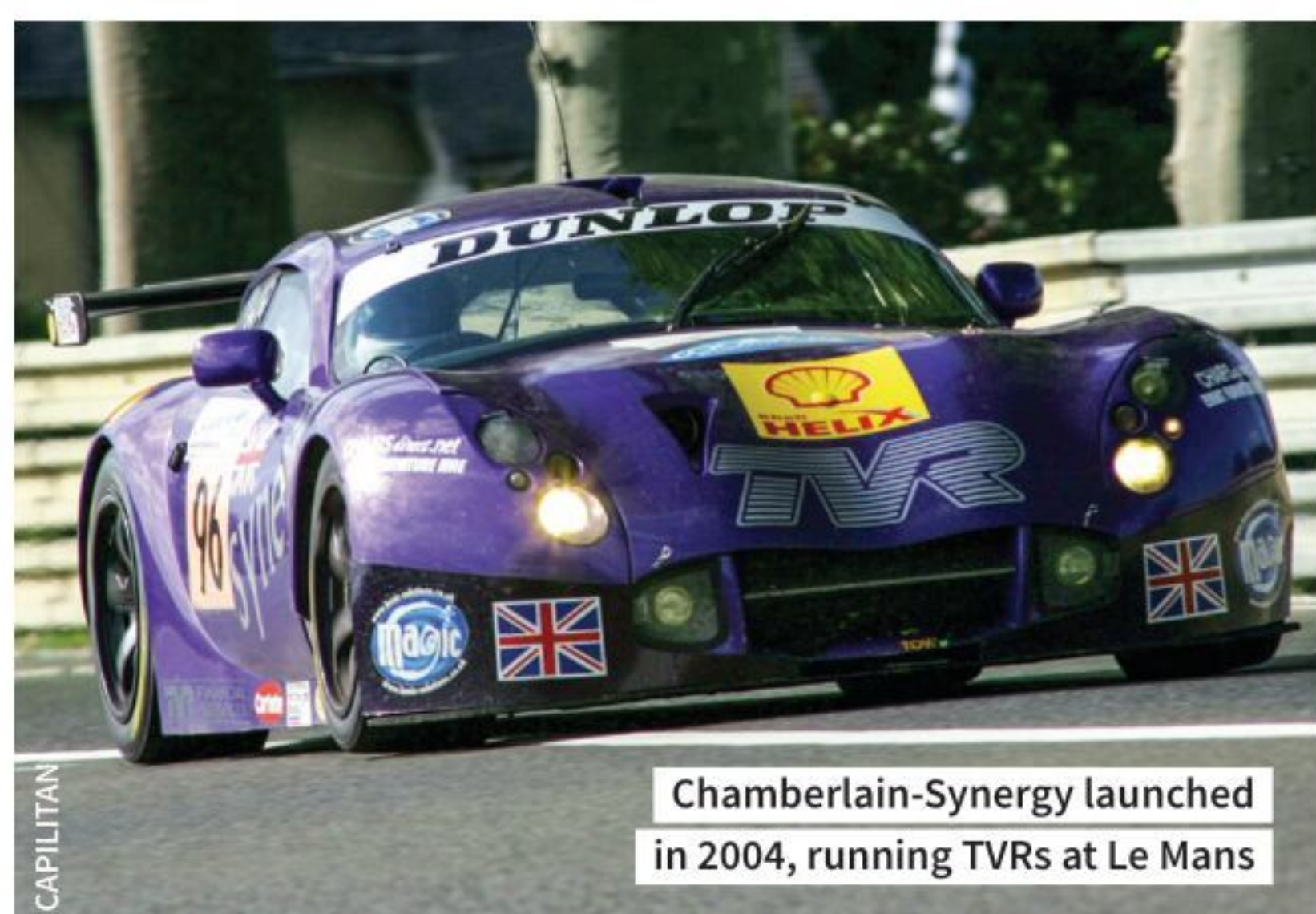
The launch of the Masters organisation's series for later sportscar machinery at the >>



FERRARO



FERRARO



CAPILTAN

Chamberlain-Synergy launched in 2004, running TVRs at Le Mans

end of 2017 resulted in a change of focus. BBM has become one of the major players in the Masters Endurance Legends championship for prototypes and GTs built between 1995 and 2016.

“In the era we were doing Le Mans, a customer Lola or whatever was an 18-hour car, and you were hanging on for grim death for the last quarter of the race,” says Berridge. “Quite often the LMP2 winner was among the walking wounded at the finish, but by the middle of the 2010s even the P2s could be driven flat. They became 30-hour cars. That makes them perfect for the MEL where you are doing maybe seven or eight hours’ running a year. You can get a least a couple of seasons out of them without a major service.”

BBM was responsible for liberating a fleet of Peugeot 908 P1 turbodiesels from the factory with the help of Minassian’s contacts. The Frenchman had occasionally been seen behind the wheel of a Chamberlain-Synergy Group C after getting to know his future partner during his days racing in the Rockingham-based ASCAR stock car series in the early 2000s.

All but one of the seven Peugeots – four 908 HDi V12s and three examples of its V8 successor, known internally as the 90X –

have already made it back out onto the race track. And with success. David Porter, a sparring partner of Berridge in historic Formula Ford in the 1980s, has already tasted success with a 908 HDi in the MEL’s US spin-off, winning its blue-ribbon events at Daytona and Sebring. Prolific historic racer Shaun Lynn was a double winner in the last round of the 2021 MEL at Spa in October.

“My approach was to identify the hurdles in operating such a high-technology racing car, not through just one season where you ran out the remaining life of the components, but over 10 years,” says Berridge. “The deal I did with Peugeot Sport was to get BBM in the position with both support and parts where we could continue to run them for the long term. They have bent over backwards to help us and love seeing the cars out on the race track.”

The BR01 LMP2, designed by Paolo Catone like both iterations of the 908, is another car in which BBM specialises. It bought five examples of the car built in France by BR Engineering for Russian entrant SMP Racing for the 2015 and 2016 seasons, and has so far returned four to the race track.

Going racing in MEL and other series is important for BBM, according to Berridge. “It puts us in the opportunity stream,” he explains. “It puts our name out there so we can buy cars, restore cars and sell cars. Running a racing team is a precarious business. You need multiple streams of income to make it work.”

BBM was founded with the intent to focus on what might be described as post-historic prototypes. But it hasn’t quite worked out like that, although the workshops currently house a couple of Creation-AIM/Judd CA07s and two ex-Level 5 P2 Lolas – one open-top B11/40 and a B11/80 coupe.

Wander around the BBM workshops, and you’ll find an eclectic mix of machinery. There



Berridge celebrates Group C race win at Le Mans in 2012

is the 1990 Daytona 24 Hours-winning Jaguar XJR-12 IMSA GTP, an ex-Kremer Porsche 962C and a Lamborghini Murcielago R-GT car. One of the purple Chamberlain-Synergy TVRs from 2004 is due in for some work soon.

Then there are also a couple of Ginetta-Nissan LMP3s, the second-generation car that came on stream in 2020. It was one of these that BBM kindly provided for four young hopefuls to drive in the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award assessment day at Silverstone last month. “I’m proud of the club,” says Berridge of the British Racing Drivers’ Club.

There are even a trio of Rolls-Royces of varying vintages that are part of a rare non-racing project, while BBM is expecting a Porsche 911 GT1 road car imminently. The only problem is that the BBM workshops are turning into that Chinese puzzle once again. ❧



Ginetta gave Award drivers a new challenge

FERRARI

THE WORKING-CLASS RACER MADE GOOD

Bob Berridge reckons he “hasn’t done too bad for a working-class lad from Stockton-on-Tees”. In a career that didn’t begin until he was 28, he has won titles at the wheel of Formula Ford, Historic F1 and LMP machinery, as well as racing in Formula 3 and touring cars. He’s also been a prime mover in two series



Brief BTCC stint for Vauxhall, here at Brands in 1990

now consigned to the dustbin of history – ASCAR and Grand Prix Masters, the attempt to create a seniors tour for ex-F1 drivers.

Berridge began racing in FF1600 in 1983 at the wheel of a Van Diemen FA73 costing £635, before swapping to a Lotus 69FF in which he claimed the British Racing & Sports Car Club’s Pre-’74 title in 1985. After a flirtation with Formula 3, driving the long-forgotten Vision VF3, he was briefly a Vauxhall driver in the British Touring Car Championship. Business commitments meant a decision to “make my racing a hobby” and a switch to historic racing. He took the Cosworth-powered RAM 01 of 1983 vintage to the 1997 Thoroughbred GP



1986 Formula Ford Festival in a Lotus FF69

SUTTON

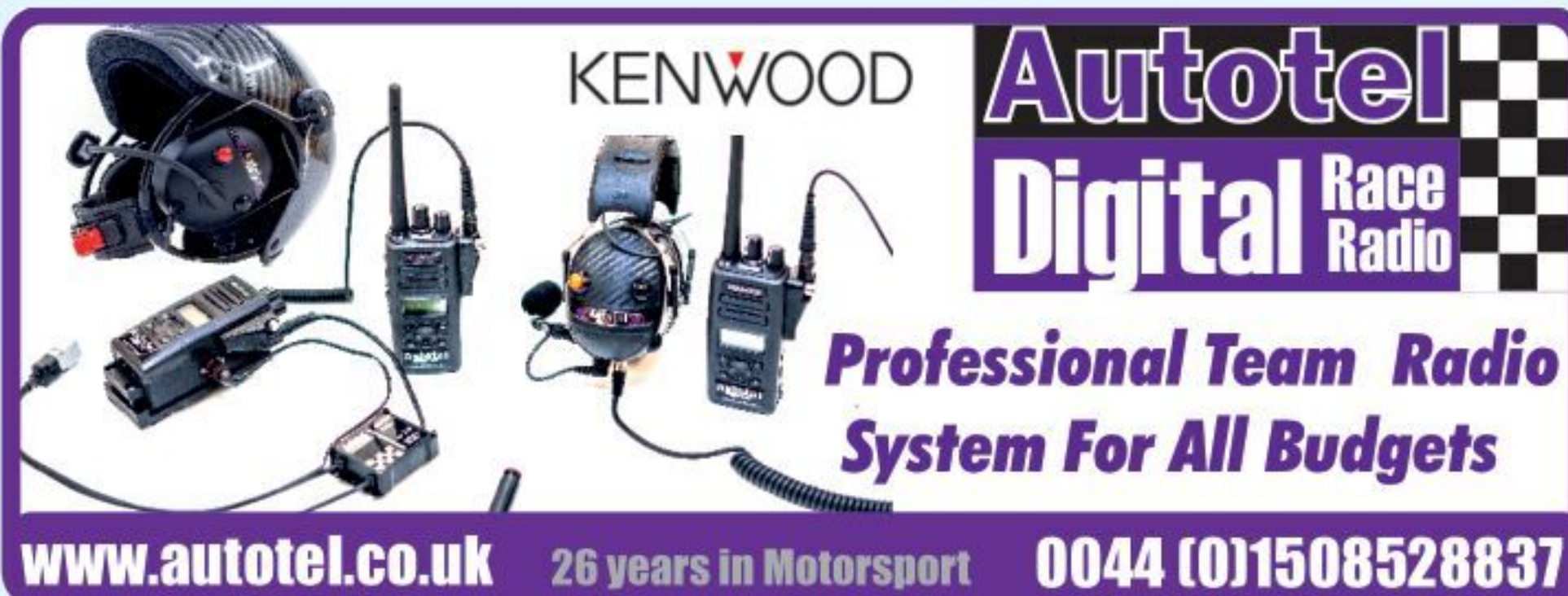
title and repeated the feat in 1998-99 with a Williams FW08.

He was a partner with touring car legend John Cleland in an ASCAR team before being asked to take over the running of the series the following year. Three years later, Berridge was brought in as operations director of GPM. He was responsible for getting Delta Motorsport at Silverstone to build the fleet of one-make single-

seaters driven by the likes of Nigel Mansell, Emerson Fittipaldi and Riccardo Patrese.

Berridge has never really stopped racing, though there have been several Sinatra-style retirements. Most recently he was at the wheel of a Ginetta-Chevrolet G57 prototype at the Creventic 12 Hours at Silverstone. He ended up winning along with Mike Simpson and Steve Tandy.

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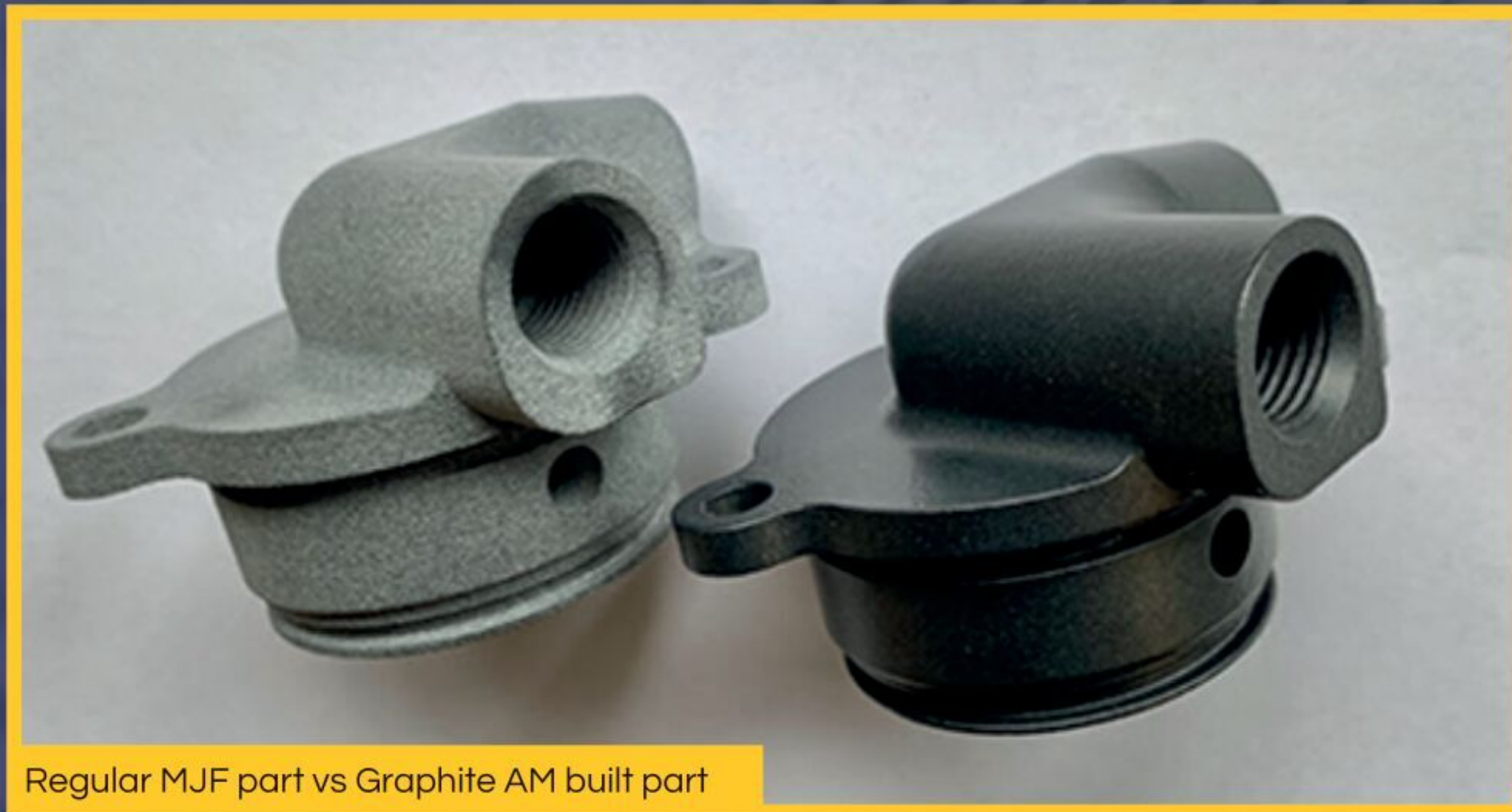
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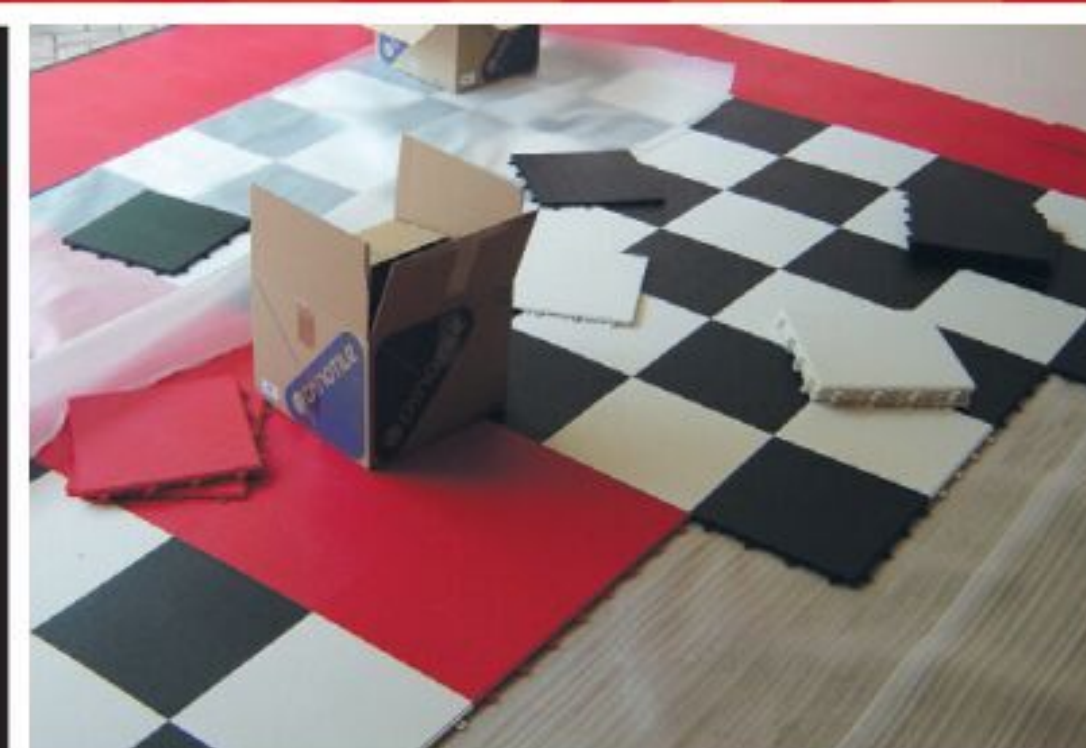
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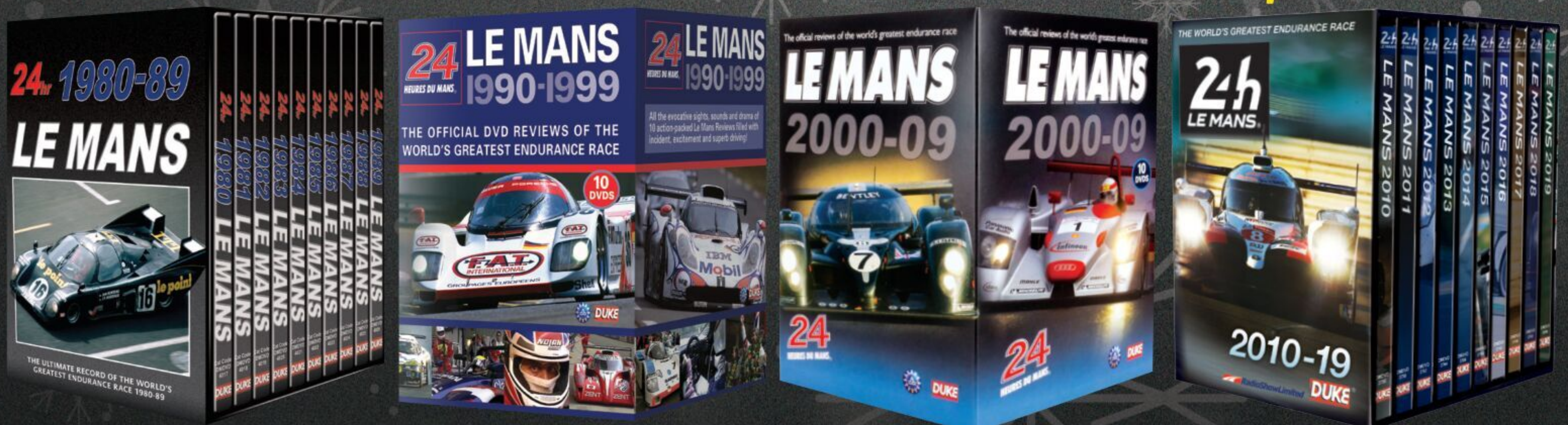


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EQUIPE PLANS 60-CAR MGB BIRTHDAY RACE AT SILVERSTONE

EQUIPE CLASSIC RACING

Equipe Classic Racing will organise a special MGB 60 race next year to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the popular model's launch and has also revealed a draft calendar for its first season of running its own race meetings.

A special 40-minute one or two-driver pitstop race is planned on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit on 11 June next year to commemorate the MGB's birthday. Following the Northamptonshire venue getting permission to run greater capacity grids on the GP layout this year, it is hoped that 60 cars will contest the event to celebrate the MGB's 60 years.

Organisers are planning to get as many ex-works cars to attend as possible, as well as some of the drivers, and have received a huge amount of interest since the plans were revealed earlier this week.

"Our staple car for Equipe GTS is the MGB and, having owned one for 20-odd years, the reason is you get a lot of bang for your buck," said Equipe partner Rob Cull. "We're going to inject a nice bit of fun into it. Our idea is to put 60 FIA MGBs on a grid, which we believe would be a world record – that will be stunning."

Aside from the special MGB race, next year is an important one for Equipe as it will begin organising its own race meetings, having previously bought track time from other clubs – primarily



MGBs are a staple part of Equipe events and will get special 60th anniversary race

HAWKINS

the MG Car Club in recent seasons.

A seven-event 2022 UK calendar is planned and this includes ECR's 3-Hour Relay race and its Super Sprint – where drivers contest short sprint races and progress through a series of rounds to create finals that feature cars of a similar performance. However, the venues for the two fixtures have swapped, with the Super Sprint moving to Donington Park in mid-summer to give it a "different dynamic" and the relay returning to its original Silverstone location.

The ECR schedule also includes

one-day visits to Brands Hatch and Oulton Park, as well as two trips to Snetterton. "It's great we've got such good dates at good circuits and that shows the confidence circuit owners have in us," added Cull.

"The fact we're not having to work with other car clubs means we can do our own thing and get our own identity out there. We're in control of the finances as well to make sure they're cost-effective – our races will be the same prices as they are this year."

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Historic Formula Ford ace impressed in Lotus Elan

PNUTPRODUCTIONS

Fitz-Simon stars at Laguna Seca

HISTORICS

Buoyed by Historic Formula Ford and Formula Junior victories at Silverstone last month, Horatio Fitz-Simon was an emphatic double winner on his Laguna Seca debut in a Lotus Elan 26R last weekend.

Driving the car with race history dating back to Oulton Park and Crystal

Palace in 1964, and newly acquired by supporter ART Car Club, Fitz-Simon secured an "11th hour" Velocity Invitational entry, with mentor Howden Ganley's help.

Fitz-Simon said: "Laguna Seca is incredible – I've never experienced anything like the Corkscrew before. From the moment you drop down until you reach the

bottom, you feel like you've been winded.

"I qualified on class pole [GT cars under 2.5 litres], but started both races from the back for fun. From 24th, I won both races and my lap times would have been competitive with the [Shelby] Cobras and [Ferrari] 250 GTOs in the over 2.5-litre class."

MARCUS PYE

Top Ginetta Junior team R Racing to run GT4 Aston



ASTON MARTIN

BRITISH GT

Leading Ginetta Junior squad R Racing will expand into the British GT Championship's GT4 class with Aston Martin next season.

The team was only formed in 2019 but has achieved considerable success during its existence. It ran a driver to the top three of the Ginetta Junior standings in each of its first two campaigns, before powering Aston Millar to this year's crown and winning last weekend's Winter Series with Josh Rowledge.

The squad's bosses evaluated a number of different routes for the team's next step, including a move into single-seaters, but decided on GTs as an Aston Martin partner team with the Vantage GT4. Only one GT4 Aston regularly raced in the series this year, despite it being a proven winner after the TF Sport squad claimed the class crown with one of the machines in 2019.

"We've been thinking for a while about what to do," said R Racing boss Jamie Ross. "It seemed a shame to build up good relationships with the

kids over two years and then let them go when they turn 17.

"Single-seaters is a lot to ask – there's a lot of big teams and I think it's hard to attract people. It's a busy market at the moment and the budget is massive – I think it's easier to sell the GT route.

"We weighed up all the manufacturers and the best all-round one is the one we've gone with. Being associated with a brand like Aston Martin is quite cool for us and Aston Martin is really supportive."

Josh Miller, who finished eighth in this year's Ginetta

Junior standings with R Racing, is the first driver confirmed for the Aston programme.

"I feel you find yourself learning more when you take a big step up and throw yourself in at the deep end," said Miller, who is due to get his first experience behind the wheel of a GT4 later this month. "My aim is to prove myself among more experienced drivers. It's a very competitive grid but I want to be in the mix and fight for podiums. Being 16, people scoff at you a little bit but I want to prove to everyone that I'm ready for it."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

G40 Cup joins Britcar Trophy

GINETTA G40 CUP

The Ginetta G40 Cup will switch to become an endurance contest next year and will join the Britcar Trophy grid.

The category was created as the next step on the ladder for drivers progressing out of the Ginetta Racing Drivers Club series but, with the GRDC being replaced for this year by the Ginetta GT Academy, interest in the G40 Cup reduced. It ran alongside the GT5 Challenge in 2021 but will now be run under licence by SVG Motorsport team boss Andy Johnson with support from Ginetta as a division within the Britcar Trophy mini-enduros.

"It's a really good move for that car and category," said Ginetta motorsport

manager Ash Gallagher. "The G40 Cup has been the home for GRDC graduates but, without that category, we felt it was important to look at a different offering. Andy Johnson has run championships in the past and has been one of the longest-serving G40 teams, and there will be parts and technical support available. Initial feedback has been good."

Ginetta has also revealed the calendars for its other four championships for 2022, with the GT4 Supercup skipping the British Touring Car Championship opener and featuring one fewer round as the G56 GT4 is introduced.

"It gives everyone a bit of time to get up to speed," added Gallagher. "Everyone can now get used to the cars and everyone has a fair chance



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

to do a bit of testing before the start of the season."

With the GT4 Supercup down to seven events, the GT5 Challenge is due to appear at three BTCC fixtures next year. Ginetta Junior will continue to appear at nine of the 10 meetings, its place being taken by the GT Academy at Oulton Park.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

IN THE HEADLINES

LEGENDS 2022 CALENDAR

The Legends Cars National Championship has announced a 45-race calendar for next season across eight weekends, which will include a return to Oulton Park (2 April) and Anglesey (18-19 June). There will also be three visits to Brands Hatch, and sole outings to Pembrey, Donington Park and Snetterton during the season.

JHR JOINS UAE F4 SERIES

JHR Developments will make its debut in the Formula 4 United Arab Emirates Championship next month. The team will compete in a non-championship round ahead of a five-event schedule that begins in January next year and will take place over a six-week period, ending in February. Fellow British F4 squad Carlin has also committed to the series, which will debut the new Tatuus T-421 chassis that will be used in the UK next season.

GODDEN'S CAR DEBUT

International grasstrack and long track motorcycle racer Mitchel Godden made his car racing debut at Brands Hatch in the C1 Challenge last weekend. Son of former long track speedway world champion and speedway engine builder Don Godden, Mitchel had son Myles and Tim Bennett sharing his C1, having been persuaded to take part by Brands winner and ex-British Touring Car driver Patrick Watts. They finished 30th after a late off.

JORDAN USES DAD'S MINI

With Mike Jordan having raced son Andrew's Mini Miglia at Donington Park last month, the gesture was reciprocated in last weekend's Mini Winter Challenge at Brands Hatch. The 2013 British Touring Car champion had a debut run in his father's Se7en (below) and won the class in all three races. He was chased to the flag each time by fellow ex-BTCC man Jeff Smith.



GB3 was a steep learning curve for Lebbon and Elite in their maiden season

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Lebbon back for 2022 GB3 campaign with Elite Motorsport

GB3

Tom Lebbon will continue in the GB3 Championship next year with Elite Motorsport after impressing in his maiden single-seater campaign.

The 16-year-old entered 2021 as the reigning Ginetta Junior champion, a title he claimed with Elite in his rookie season of car racing. The team entered GB3 for the

first time this year, with Lebbon making the step up with the squad.

Lebbon, who turned 16 just weeks before the opening round, finished ninth in the standings with one podium, and Elite team boss Eddie Ives is confident that he will be challenging for the top places in the standings next term with GB3's new car.

"It was always a two-year plan for Tom in GB3," said Ives. "He's done a really good job in year one and our aim next season is to finish in the top three in the standings. Towards the end of the championship this year he's been in the top four or five cars on pace and that's a good place to be. This year has just been about getting confidence with the car and what he can get out of it. You learn so much having been through the whole process."

Lebbon is the second driver confirmed for GB3 in 2022 after Callum Voisin was announced by Carlin. Other potential drivers were testing at Silverstone last week, including recent Walter Hayes Trophy winner Max Esterson.

STEFAN MACKLEY

Lebbon impressed in his first season of single-seaters



Canadian team joins GB4 field

GB4

Canadian squad Atlantic Racing Team has announced its intention to compete in the new GB4 Championship.

The team has already acquired three Tatuus F4-To14 cars after taking a two-year sabbatical from racing. It has competed in F1600, Formula BMW, Formula 2000, Formula Renault, Indy Pro and a number of GT and prototype categories

over the past three decades.

"Our choice to go to the UK and with the GB4 series is based on the chassis and engine knowledge, as well as budget requirements as a junior series," said team manager Ingo Strackerjan.

"The access to sufficient historical data for the car, as well as being proven technology, will help to control costs for any GB4 driver in 2022. This may also attract

other international drivers with limited budgets."

Atlantic Racing Team becomes the 11th squad intent on joining the new MotorSport Vision-run category, which aims to act as an entry-level series into single-seaters.

It will also be associated with the British Racing Drivers' Club in its maiden season, while the GB3 Championship will continue its partnership with the BRDC for a 10th year.



RODIN RECORD-BREAKER

Rodin's FZED single-seater has unofficially broken the Donington Park National circuit lap record on a recent test day at the Leicestershire venue. World Endurance Championship racer Oliver Webb set a time of 56.83s, beating the benchmark of 57.221s set by Marijn van Kalmthout – father of IndyCar racer Rinus VeeKay – in a Benetton B197 Formula 1 car in 2011. The FZED (pictured on a previous Donington outing) is designed to be a trackday car but is also eligible for the BOSS GP series, in which van Kalmthout was racing when he set the previous record. "This lap time at Donington Park confirms how competitive the FZED would be within the BOSS GP series," said Rodin founder David Dicker.

Prototype series team up for Silverstone GP

ZEO PROTOTYPE

The Zeo Prototype Series and Sports Prototype Cup categories will team up next year for a special event on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit.

The Zeo series launched this season and featured a variety of different cars, including the UK debut of the NP01-EVO as well as numerous specifications of Radical. The Sports Prototype Cup is the home for the Revolution A-One and also features a class for Radical SR3s, but is primarily focusing on



European events during 2022, with the 19 June Silverstone race the category's only planned UK round. It is also

due to appear at Zandvoort, Spa, Barcelona and Paul Ricard.

Zeo Prototype Series coordinator Grace Williams said: "This collaboration allows us to target a grid of over 40 cars, which would be the biggest grid of prototypes seen on Silverstone GP for a while."

Sports Prototype Cup coordinator James Bailey added: "The Zeo team has done a brilliant job in reigniting interest in UK prototype racing and we're thrilled to be bringing two of our classes to their flagship event."

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Edwards still has a chance of a third
BRC crown despite switch to Polo



Edwards admits he was on BRC back foot with change of car

RALLYING

British Rally Championship title chaser Matt Edwards has admitted he knew it was always going to be difficult to claim the crown for a third consecutive season after his decision to switch cars for 2021.

Edwards's previous two BRC successes came in the R5 version of the Ford Fiesta, but at the start of this year he decided to campaign Volkswagen's Polo GTI R5 instead. Although he has won the Nicky Grist Stages and Trackrod Rally, this season has been one of frustration for Edwards as he works on finding the sweet spot of the Melvyn Evans Motorsport car.

If Edwards is to retain his crown, he must score maximum points on this weekend's Ulster Rally finale.

Anything less and he hands the title to fellow Welshman Osian Pryce.

"I knew it would be difficult starting out in a new car," said Edwards. "The fact we haven't tested much hasn't helped either so it comes as no surprise this season hasn't been a walk in the park for us. I might not have won as many rounds as I have in the past, but the one thing that gives me confidence heading into the last round is our pace. If we didn't have that, then I would be worried."

Pryce, meanwhile, is targeting a maiden crown and is not fazed by his lack of familiarity with the Ulster route. "If you are at one with the car, and you can commit to the pacenotes, then you can get the job done," he said.

JASON CRAIG

Hempshall awarded scholarship

SUPERKARTS

Samantha Hempshall is the first recipient of the Bennetts Superkart Scholarship prize that was awarded at Donington Park recently.

The scheme was launched in tribute to Roy Bennett, who suffered a nasty accident at Castle Combe back in August 2016 and sustained injuries from which he never fully recovered. He was a seasoned competitor with a passion and love for Superkart racing and

was always willing to assist up-and-coming drivers.

Multi-European and British Superkart champion Gavin Bennett (Roy's nephew) and Roy's brother Peter have provided a fund of £2000. "The aim of the scholarship is to help a driver who can display talent and enthusiasm for the sport of Superkarts, but may not have the budget which would help them progress to the sharp end of the grid," said Gavin Bennett.

The judging panel had

a difficult decision to come up with three nominees as there were many drivers who were worthy. But Hempshall's performance at Silverstone in August, when she led some of the established stars in the F250 National class and set a new lap record, could not be ignored.

In addition to the cash prize, she will also be provided with a brand-new Anderson Maverick 3 rolling chassis for use during the 2022 season.

GARY JAMES

IN THE HEADLINES

COMBE CALENDAR TWEAK

There has been a slight change to the end of the Castle Combe Racing Club's 2022 calendar following confirmation of the date of the Spa Six Hours. To avoid a clash with the Belgian event, the Autumn Classic is now due to be held on 24 September, while the CCRC finals meeting has been moved to 1 October.

DWANE PLOTS HIS DEFENCE

Jack Dwane plans to defend his 750 Motor Club Clio title next year. "I enjoy the club scene – you can go and do this with your mates and that's what I want," he said. "I also really like these cars and this championship. I think it'll be even more competitive next year and I'm looking forward to that." The series will be rebranded as the Clio Sport Championship for 2022 as it welcomes the 197 specification of the hatchback.

CARBON NEUTRAL RALLYING

The Roger Albert Clark Rally Hillman Avenger entry of Tony Jardine and Allan Harryman will be carbon neutral this year as part of the Historic Endurance Rallying Organisation's NET-HERO scheme. Emissions from the Hillman and all of its support vehicles will be offset using the web-based NET-HERO platform – where drivers can purchase credits for carbon reduction projects, such as afforestation and the restoration of peatlands – to ensure its participation is carbon neutral.

WEBB'S WINNING MALLOCKS

Clubmans racer Barry Webb scored his 20th category title this year by winning the classic Class B division of the Clubmans Sports Prototype championship in his Mallock Mk16. His other car – a Mk23 – also enjoyed title success in 2021, in the CSP2 class, in the hands of Michelle Hayward. Each of the cars (below) has won 11 crowns over the years.



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A wake-up call for officials

There was another near-miss at Brands Hatch last weekend that reminds us of the dangers marshals face and the need to prevent such situations

STEFAN MACKLEY

“Just missed the marshal” read the YouTube comment. I’d just switched on the British Automobile Racing Club’s livestream of its Brands Hatch meeting last weekend, and the remark was both eye-catching and alarming.

Sure enough, after backtracking through the video by a few minutes, there it was. The Renault Clio of Mark Williams had spun in the second Classic and Modern Motorsport Club Southern Super Saloons/Tin Tops race on Sunday and was stuck on the outside of the circuit at Druids facing oncoming traffic. It was an innocuous spin in damp conditions with no major consequences, but the driver was unable to move the car from its unsafe location.

Yet instead of a safety car being deployed, two marshals were sent to the stricken machine, which was covered only by local yellow flags as the 22-car field continued circulating around the Indy circuit. In wet conditions and with light fading, it was perhaps inevitable that something was going to happen. Ken Angell in his BMW E36 locked his brakes approaching the corner and took to the outside, skirting behind the Clio while one of the marshals stood to the side of the car. From when the Clio first spun, a further three racing laps were completed, which included the near-miss, before the decision was taken by race control to bring out the safety car.

For his part, Angell was disqualified from the results for “driving in a manner incompatible with general safety”. Perhaps the race officials considered giving themselves some sort of reprimand as well...

This is not the first time marshals have been put in a needlessly dangerous position at Brands Hatch in the past few weeks while recovering a vehicle stuck on the edge of the circuit. At the Formula Ford Festival last month, a meeting organised by the British Racing & Sports Car Club, I took a picture (above, right) after a car in one of the Mazda races became beached in the Paddock Hill Bend gravel, broadside to oncoming traffic and on the fringes of the circuit.

I and others on the banking stood in disbelief when, with a damp track and out of sight for approaching drivers, a snatch vehicle was sent out, with a marshal forced to bend down to attach a tow-rope to the stranded car, all while the race continued under waved yellows. It certainly wasn’t the first car to go off at Paddock, and neither would it be the last that weekend, which makes the decision by race control all the more difficult to understand.

These are just two instances in the past few weeks but, up and down the country, there have been occasions where Autosport journalists have seen or been told about close calls, where marshals have been sent out onto live circuits and put themselves at risk.

Yes, we all know motorsport is dangerous. And yes, drivers



absolutely should be prepared to slow down and even stop when waved yellow flags are shown. Many don’t slow down, though, and that’s something that has become a problem across motorsport. Mechanical failures can also happen in the blink of an eye or slippery conditions can catch out even the most experienced drivers.

No one likes to see safety cars, and I have written on this very page in the past that they can create chaos in the running order, especially in pitstop races. But how can the decision be taken not to implement one in situations like those described here where marshals are in the firing line on the edge of the track?

Just last week on this page, Autosport questioned decisions made by those in race control at the Walter Hayes Trophy. As stated then, working as a race official cannot be an easy task and difficult split-second decisions need to be made, sometimes perhaps without a full picture from those on the ground in the midst of a race. But we’re in 2021, and for a marshal to be told by officials that they are allowed to enter a live circuit to retrieve a car on the very edge of the track is foolhardy at best.

Some people reading this might not like what has been said, but let’s not forget that, just a few months ago, a marshal did lose his life. The circumstances were vastly different, with the victim Rob Foote and another marshal stationed on a post approaching Paddock when it was hit by a car. But the outpouring of grief at race meetings and on social media following the accident was felt throughout the racing community. Serious questions need to be asked by those in power at Motorsport UK if they feel the above situations are acceptable before another member of the orange army is seriously injured or worse. ❧



Watts family delight after C1 success at Brands

BRANDS HATCH
BARC
13-14 NOVEMBER

Even with the large amount of success he has enjoyed in his lengthy career, few victories could have given former British Touring Car Championship star Patrick Watts more pride than he enjoyed with daughter Aimee in the C1 Challenge at Brands Hatch last weekend.

Together with Orlando Lindsay, the pair stormed to an emotional first win in the category in their Ladybird-Daddy entry, as an impressive 43 cars took to the grid for the three-hour endurance race on Saturday.

Lindsay built up a big lead over the rest

of the field during his opening stint before a safety car period led to a flurry of pitstop activity. After Watts Jr had taken over driving duties from Lindsay, the team remained handily placed in the top six as the race entered its second hour.

Among those also in contention for victory at this stage was the Quattro Formaggio entry of Alistair May and Chris Parkes. The duo would take the lead at the two-hour mark, but surrendered their advantage back to the Watts family once further driver changes and refuelling had been completed. Back in front, Watts Sr was able to reel off the remaining time with little drama as he secured a memorable win.

"We exceeded our expectations with

a sixth place at Oulton, but this means everything," said Patrick. "I'm so proud of Aimee. The novice cross has only just come off the back of the car and her lap times today have been great."

Aimee added: "I couldn't be happier to win on our home track. I think mum nearly cried when I phoned her!"

Parkes and May claimed second, but they had to stave off a late challenge from Robin Welsh (JW Bird Motorsport). Welsh attempted to snatch the position while he and Parkes were lapping backmarkers along the Brabham Straight, but Welsh tangled with Ian Gorrington, and Gorrington spun into the pitwall, which led to the race being halted five minutes early.

ROWLEDGE DOES ENOUGH FOR GINETTA WINTER CROWN

By scoring two dominant wins on Saturday, Josh Rowledge put himself in the best position to secure the Ginetta Junior Winter Series the following day. But Sunday proved to be more of a battle, and holding his nerve and staying out of trouble proved to be crucial.

Between the final round of the regular Ginetta Junior season (where he had finished seventh in the final standings) and the Winter Series, Rowledge had switched allegiance from Elite Motorsport to R Racing. After Saturday's qualifying, the new partnership appeared to be working well, as he secured pole for both races. Harri Reynolds joined Rowledge on the front row for race one, while Liam McNeilly – runner-up in the 2021 standings –

claimed that spot for race two.

Reynolds "gave his all" to try to force Rowledge into a mistake in the opener, but he was forced to settle for second ahead of a rapidly closing Joe Warhurst. In the second contest, McNeilly also had difficulties getting close to Rowledge, whose form looked ominous heading into Sunday. "I've had a great car underneath me all day," Rowledge said after his race two success. "I have to say a big thanks to the team for their hard work."

Qualifying on Sunday proved tougher for Rowledge. Three red flags disrupted the session and left him eighth on the grid for race three and vulnerable to a potential midfield incident. Exiting Druids on lap one, Sonny Smith spun and Rowledge was caught out, enduring his own

spin himself and dropping to the back of field. He recovered to 11th, but third for McNeilly gave the Fox Motorsport ace the chance of title glory heading into the finale.

A lengthy safety-car period disrupted race four, but Rowledge avoided any further drama to claim the title with fifth, enabling him to triumph by a single point from the consistent McNeilly, who inherited the race-four victory.

"It's a massive achievement," said Rowledge. "Saturday was really positive. I was in traffic in qualifying today [Sunday], which hurt our chances, but to win the Winter Series is mega."

Aside from the championship protagonists, other drivers also impressed during the course of the weekend. His race-three spin aside, Smith



L-r: Watts Jr with dad and Lindsay

There was a strong entry for the Mini Winter Challenge triple-header, with numbers more than double those at the equivalent event two years ago.

Rupert Deeth cantered to victory in race one after closest challenger Endaf Owens was forced into early retirement with oil pressure issues. Scott Kendall seized his chance to claim the runner-up spot late in the race after Colin Peacock was slowed by backmarkers at Clearways. Owens charged back to claim the honours in races two and three, while Deeth and Joe Thompson took a second apiece.

Behind the Miglia drivers, their Se7en counterparts provided plenty of entertainment, most notably former BTCC team-mates Andrew Jordan and Jeff Smith. Despite Smith's best efforts, Miglia champion Jordan came out on top of their duel each time to claim three wins, driving the car father Mike used in the main Se7en championship during 2021.

Caution periods disrupted the opening Britcar Trophy 'Into the Night' event on Saturday. Benji Hetherington and Ian Humphris claimed the spoils in their Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport after team-mate and poleman Carl Cavers was forced to serve a stop/go penalty. Sean Doyle (partnering Cavers) attempted to



Birley (left) took another two wins at Brands Hatch

make amends after the mandatory pitstops, but skated off the road and into the Paddock Hill Bend gravel trying to usurp Niall Bradley's BMW M3 E46, and took third.

Cavers and Humphris teamed up for race two and led before the pit window, but another stop/go penalty for a pitlane infringement relegated them to second. Steve Rothery was the grateful beneficiary, picking up a popular win at his home track in his Peugeot 308.

Rod Birley was another local resident to enjoy success over the weekend at the wheel of his Ford Escort WRC with two wins in the Super Saloons/Tin Tops double-header. Birley took a lights-to-flag win in a wet race one, although he was kept honest by the VW Scirocco of Steve Dann.

Race two ended controversially when Nick Sutton (Mitsubishi Lancer E10) passed Birley seconds before a caution period ended. The pass was deemed illegal and Sutton was penalised post-race.

In the Intermarque Silhouette races, former champion Malcolm Blackman's Vauxhall Tigra withstood race-long pressure from Danny Hunn's Ford Fiesta to win race one, before Steve Burrows took a dominant victory in race two ahead of fellow Tigra driver Dave York.

MARK LIBBETER

WEEKEND WINNERS



C1 CHALLENGE

Ladybird-Daddy (Patrick Watts/Aimee Watts/Orlando Lindsay)

MINI WINTER CHALLENGE

Race 1 Rupert Deeth (Miglia)

Races 2 & 3 Endaf Owens (Miglia, above)

BRITCAR TROPHY

Race 1 Ian Humphris/Benji Hetherington (Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport)

Race 2 Steve Rothery (Peugeot 308, below)

SUPER SALOONS/TIN TOPS

Races 1 & 2 Rod Birley (Ford Escort WRC)

INTERMARQUE SILHOUETTES

Race 1 Malcolm Blackman (Vauxhall Tigra)

Race 2 Steve Burrows (Vauxhall Tigra)

GINETTA JUNIOR WINTER SERIES

Races 1 & 2 Josh Rowledge

Race 3 Aqil Alibhai

Race 4 Liam McNeilly



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

made no mistakes en route to claiming Rookie title honours with a clean sweep of class wins. Elsewhere, Reynolds, Warhurst, Max Dodds and the returning Tom Edgar put on a show.

Reynolds and Edgar indulged in a fine tussle over third in race two until a clash at Druids on lap 12 of 16 enabled Dodds to sneak through.

The unfortunate Edgar endured rotten luck on Sunday. He dominated race three, but a mechanical problem slowed him to a standstill on the final tour and handed victory to Aqil Alibhai. A similar performance in race four also went unrewarded when, after taking the win, he and second-placed Warhurst were handed post-race penalties for overtaking the safety car before it entered the pits.

MARK LIBBETER



Rowledge leads Reynolds, Warhurst and McNeilly

Boston and Mansfield enjoy repeat success

ANGLESEY
BRSCC RACE OF REMEMBRANCE
12-14 NOVEMBER

Often it pays to go beyond the headlines. In this latest Race of Remembrance, back at Anglesey after a COVID-induced year away, Rob Boston and Peter Mansfield won their second Race of Remembrance on the bounce in their Lotus Elise. The Rob Boston Racing machine led home the special event's best-ever 53-strong entry in unseasonably dry and mild conditions.

Boston and Mansfield this time did it after topping both qualifying sessions, taking pole with a best time close to three seconds clear. Boston then led from the off and, within a couple of hours of the 12-hour race, had a lap on the field.

But this one, just like Boston and Mansfield's 2019 victory, wasn't easy. Last time, a late brake scare threw their seemingly crushing win into doubt. This time, the brake-related scare was sooner, late in Saturday's opening six-hour segment.

"We had a minor mechanical failure which actually led to a long brake pedal, which happened on one occasion and never again," Boston said, "but on the occasion it happened I ended up in the wall. So a very heavy frontal impact but, because it was absolutely square on, it recoiled out of the barriers and we made it back."

Add a couple of penalties in that first part for the Elise, and it gave opportunity to attack to a gaggle of Caterhams, the best of which were competing for the Heroes Trophy rather than in the Caterhams'



Lotus Elise duo again won
Race of Remembrance,
but it wasn't straightforward

common preserve of the concurrent relay. Come the overnight halfway-point halt, the Elise's advantage was just 5.7 seconds. "The Caterhams always keep us honest," Boston added. "There's always a blooming Caterham somewhere!"

But, with the Elise repaired overnight, and it having better fuel range than the Caterham, Boston and Mansfield regained control and won by a lap. It was a fast race, with 384 laps completed – 33 more than last time – and, summing up the battle, the final top 11 consisted of three Elises and eight Caterham 270Rs. And, given the Caterham 7's origins, there was very much a Lotus theme.

"It's all very fitting and quite poignant because of the young 19th Regiment [that Mansfield served in] being here today and it was a really nice one to win, it feels very

special," Boston reflected. "I'm always proud just to be here let alone compete and win. The event gets better every year. The driving standards were the best they've ever been."

The Solo64 trio of Lee Bristow, Will Rossetti and Giuseppe Felet led the Caterham 270Rs home in second place, and Bristow, for whom it was his second runner-up finish in a row in this event, reckoned its run was flawless.

"We said before the race the key is to have no penalties and just do a clean race, and we did exactly that," said Bristow. "All the pitstops were bang on four minutes [the minimum time], clean stops, all the team was excellent. Unfortunately, we just lacked that little bit in the end."

"No damage, car ran perfectly. Just our lack of fuel capacity hurt us in the end,



A 53-car field took
part in this year's race

WEEKEND WINNERS

RACE OF REMEMBRANCE

(384 laps) 1 Rob Boston Racing (Peter Mansfield/Rob Boston – Lotus Elise); 2 Solo64 (Lee Bristow/Will Rossetti/Giuseppe Felet – Caterham 270R) -1 lap; 3 Rocket Racing (Steve McCulley/Don Henshall/Andy Perry – Caterham 270R); 4 PaddlUp with Lovecars (Joe Priday/Fred Chiddicks/Danny Holland/Paul Woodman – Caterham 270R); 5 Brake Dancers (Paul Hearnden/Daryl Cresswell/Tim Steel/Harry Eyre – Caterham 270R); 6 ES Motorsport (Michael Edwards/Bailey Edwards – Lotus Elise). **Class winners Brake Dancers; Numbers Racing (Clive Chisnall/Neil Chisnall/Matt Pickford/Kevin Silvain – Mazda MX-5 Mk1); Paul Sheard Autosport (Scott Ferguson/Steve Andrew/Neil Luke/Adam Wilnott – Mazda MX-5 Mk3); CSC Racing (Stephen Beswick/Patrick Scharfegger/Simon Kilham – BMW 116i); Team Torpedo (Stuart Bliss/Andrew Dyer/Richard Bliss – Toyota Aygo); WRC in beer we trust (Clive Brookson/James Poulton/George Smith/David Drinkwater – Citroen C1). **Fastest lap** Rob Boston Racing 1m36.668s (78.20mph). **Pole** Rob Boston Racing. **Starters** 53.**

CLUBSPORT TROPHY

Luke Handley (VW Golf, below)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

so we had to do one more stop with an hour to go. Next year we'll come back with a bigger fuel tank and try a bit harder."

Another 270R, shared by Rocket Racing's Steve McCulley, Don Henshall and Andy Perry, completed the podium in third and had actually led for a little of Sunday morning. It made an additional pitstop with two and a half hours left because McCulley thought a wheel was falling off, although the team felt that didn't cost places as things transpired. The Honda Civic Type R of Ricky Coomber, Zachary Lucas and Harry Ormerod had also been in the mix until a gearbox problem towards the end of the race's first half on Saturday.

The event this time had a support race added, for the British Racing & Sports Car Club's Clubsport Trophy. The 45-minute pitstop counter was won by Luke Handley's Volkswagen Golf. Poleman Gary Mitchell, giving his Global GT Light a run-out, led the opening stint but lost two laps in his stop as he had to refuel his car, which usually takes part in shorter races. This let Handley, who lurked not far behind, through for victory.

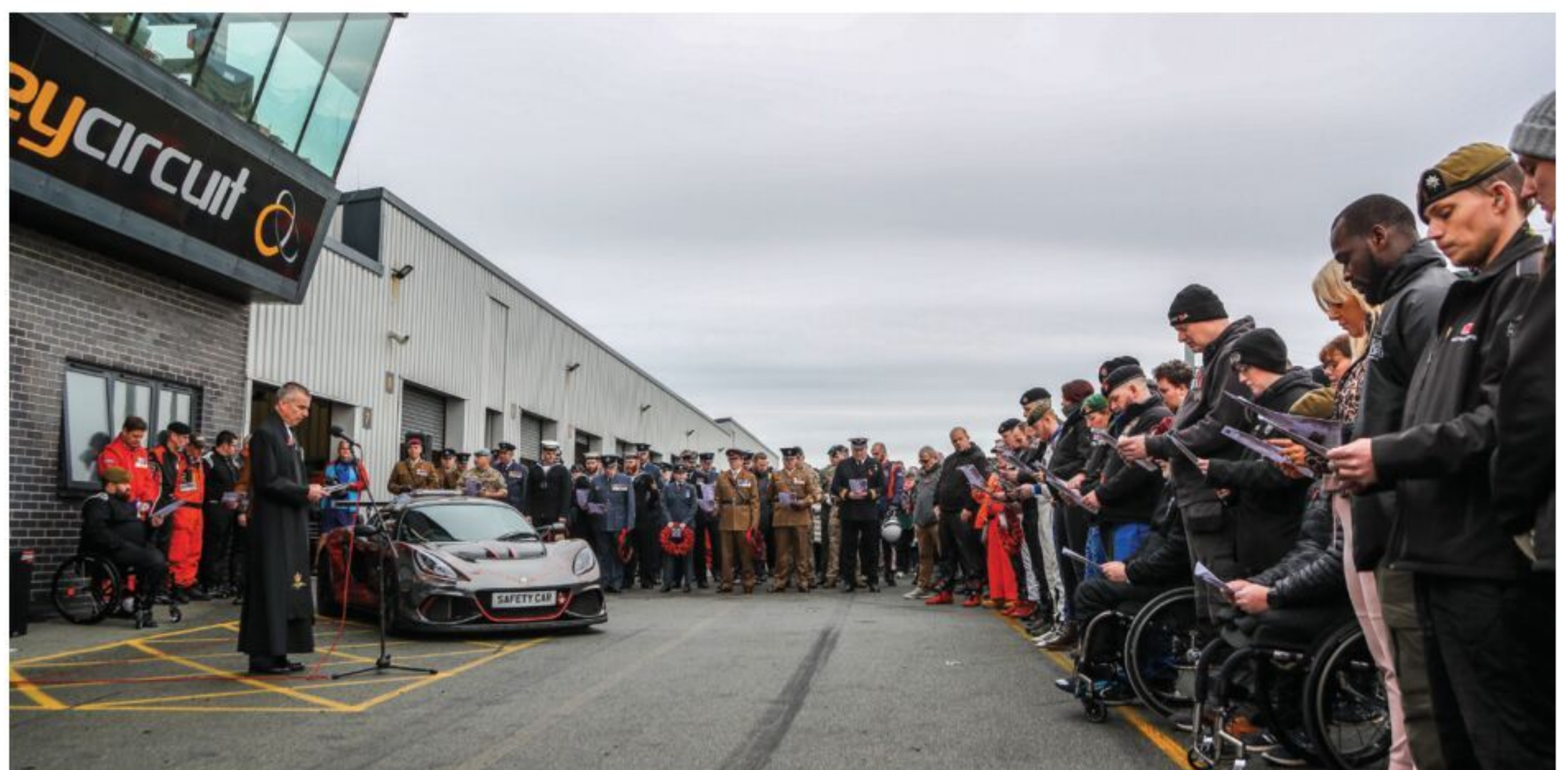
GRAHAM KEILLOH



CAUGHT SHORT Reigning MX-5 Cup champion Ben Short alongside runner-up Ben Hancy plus Alec Livesley shared an MX-5. And the trio has form, winning the Heroes Trophy in 2015. This time they had less luck, as mechanical woes left them 35 laps down, though a steady Sunday got them back to 20th. "We were trying to be clever and wanted to run a slow car in a fast class," Short admitted. "The second half of the race went quite well but by then we'd turned the power down to something more sensible."



SHORT ON LUCK Ex-Le Mans frontrunner Martin Short and hotshoe son Morgan once again paired up, this time for their Race of Remembrance debuts, joining Craig Denman in a BMW 116i. They led Class E decisively, but were stopped by Sunday-morning engine failure. Short Sr said: "Stephen [Docherty of track-group] helped Morgan with some stuff on the MG [racing in MG Cup] and he said why don't you do Race of Remembrance? Little did I know Stephen was one of the race's founding people."



WRAPPED BOW The third-generation Race of Remembrance safety car, or 'poppy car', made its bow: a Lotus Exige Cup 430 designed and wrapped by Mission Motorsport beneficiaries featuring thousands of hand-placed poppies. The charity's CEO James Cameron said: "The opportunity to connect with a veteran audience within Lotus Cars and to provide the opportunity for service leavers and veterans to find new jobs with an amazing British sportscar company led to one of the final Exiges [being used]."

SEASON
REVIEW

BARWELL CLEANS UP AGAIN

Leo Machitski and Dennis Lind's consistency paid dividends as British GT's decision to drop the Silver class yielded the same outcome: a Barwell title

JAMES NEWBOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP

motorsport
IMAGES

Eight winners from nine races in the 2021 British GT Championship would suggest the season was a wide-open affair. Five crews held a mathematical chance of the title heading into the final round at Donington Park, as organiser SRO was totally vindicated in returning the series to its traditional Pro-Am format.

But that Barwell Motorsport pair Leo Machitski and Dennis Lind prevailed after a tense two hours, during which Machitski claimed to have aged 10 years, should come as no surprise when considering their peerless consistency. Aside from being the blameless victims in a first corner tangle in the first Donington race – Machitski unable to avoid Michael Igoe's WPI Motorsport Lamborghini, which had been turned around by Nick Jones – they were never outside the top five.

Podiums came in five of the nine races, taking maximum scores for victory at Spa (the year's standout drive, winning by 49 seconds) and for second at Oulton (behind the guesting RAM Mercedes of Kevin Tse and Tom Onslow-Cole). The pressure-cooker Donington finale was the only meeting where they weren't truly in the hunt. Even there, they finished fourth. Fifth in the second race at Snetterton, where Lind felt the team had gone the wrong way on tyre pressures in the wet, was their lowest finish all year.

Machitski, the 2006 GT3 champion, was returning to the British scene after several years of racing for Am Cup and Pro-Am glory in GT World Challenge Europe fields packed with all-Pro line-ups – and relished fighting for outright honours again. There was no doubting his sincerity when he said, after wrapping up the 2021 British GT title, that it “feels far more important” than any of his European accomplishments, or indeed his 2006 crown – back when GT2s

Barwell
Lamborghini
of Machitski and
Lind was only once
outside the top five
in 2021

were still top dog. His experiences have taught him to box clever and furthered his understanding of how to win championships, which he applied to excellent effect (lap one spin at Silverstone aside).

“I know it's not speed that does it,” he says. “It doesn't mean we don't have the speed, we do, we showed that in every free practice. Unfortunately, I couldn't show it in qualifying when it mattered a few times, apart from Spa!”

Machitski scoffs at the suggestion that he's driving the best he ever has. “No, absolutely not!” he says. “I've done a lot of laps last year and when I won the European [Endurance Am Cup division in 2018-19]. When you're driving for a title, it's always in the back of your head that you have to keep it on-track. The best I drive is when I don't care about points. That's why in practice I'm usually one of the quickest Ams. When it comes to the race, I know that it's not the outright pace that wins the championship, so I always bring it a notch back.”

Together with the perma-charging Lind, who claimed a season-high six fastest laps, they made a formidable pairing. This was an important season for the Dane after losing his Lamborghini factory status last year, and he immediately served warning of what to expect by passing Yelmer Buurman for third on the way to setting fastest lap at Brands Hatch. Perhaps his highlight of the season, Spa domination aside, was stealing third from Jonny Adam on the final lap of Snetterton race one (earning points for second as one-off TF Sport Aston Martin pair Ahmad Al Harthy and Charlie Eastwood took a dominant win), having emerged from the pits in eighth.

His only blemishes were being mugged for second on the final lap at Silverstone by team-mate Sandy Mitchell – which cost a maximum score on one of three occasions this year that a crew ineligible for points took victory – and overshooting Turn 1 at the Snetterton race-two restart, losing two positions.

“Me and Leo get on so well and we drive the car quite similarly – we like the car to do the same things and that's been super-helpful,” he



WPI Motorsport's Igoe
was left going nowhere
after Donington clash



“EVERY TIME I’VE DRIVEN FOR THIS TEAM IT’S A GREAT ATMOSPHERE, THEY ALL KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING”

says. “I’ve hung out with Leo for most of the year and every time we’ve gone to a race track, I’ve visited his apartment beforehand and just hung out, been good friends. I think it’s brought a very calm environment.”

Machitski adds: “Every time I’ve driven for this team, it’s a great atmosphere, everyone knows exactly what they’re doing. This is a team sport. It’s not me and Dennis winning, it’s the team.”

Barwell wrapped up the teams’ title too, and was once again the only outfit with two cars in the fight heading to the finale. Mitchell – now a fully fledged Pro after winning the 2020 crown as a Silver pairing with Rob Collard – and Adam Balon’s title hopes were heavily dented at Brands when James Cottingham’s misjudged lunge on Balon left both stuck in the Paddock Hill Bend gravel. After out-duelling Lind for the Silverstone ‘win’, behind Martin Kodric and Hunter Abbott’s guesting 2 Seas Mercedes, Balon’s self-induced trip into the gravel at Stavelot cost a potential podium at Spa, and they were fortunate even to finish Snetterton race one with a brake disc issue – but fifth was hardly ideal. Second places at Snetterton and Oulton kept them in the hunt, but they missed further podiums when carrying success penalties – a feat managed by Machitski and Lind twice (at Silverstone and Snetterton).

Balon enjoyed working with Mitchell after Phil Keen’s switch to WPI, and has his sights firmly set on the title next year. “I feel like I’ve made much more progress this year than I did last year,” he says, “so I feel like I’ve gone forward. My pace at the circuits I’ve always slightly struggled at has been better, so I’m looking forward to next season.”

Barwell’s closest challenge came from RAM Mercedes pairing Ian Loggie and Buurman, who again took the Pro-Am title but missed out on the outright honours they craved. A model of consistency, the duo took an overdue victory in the wet in the second Snetterton bout, but Loggie believes they were let down by misfortune at Spa and Snetterton race one. The points loss from these two races – conservatively placed at 10 points – would have been enough to usurp Barwell’s champs.

At the former, Loggie believed he’d judged the lights perfectly – “I thought, ‘I’m going to be first off the first corner here,’” he recalls – but Richard Neary had made an even better one from the back of the grid. As Loggie moved left to jink around poleman Machitski, Donington >>

GT3 DRIVERS’ CHAMPIONSHIP TOP SIX

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	PTS
1	Leo Machitski/Dennis Lind	Barwell Motorsport	Lamborghini Huracan Evo	172
2	Ian Loggie/Yelmer Buurman	RAM Racing	Mercedes-AMG	162.5
3	Adam Balon/Sandy Mitchell	Barwell Motorsport	Lamborghini Huracan Evo	142.5
4	Michael Igoe/Phil Keen	WPI Motorsport	Lamborghini Huracan Evo	135
5	Andrew Howard	Beechdean AMR	Aston Martin Vantage	129.5
6	Jonny Adam	Beechdean AMR	Aston Martin Vantage	111.5





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victor Neary thundered into the RAM car — ending his own race and causing Loggie to lose eight laps in the pits to repairs. They still scored points for sixth given the shortfall in entries that weekend, but the delays suffered by Beechdean's Andrew Howard (who pitted one lap before the window opened and had to come in again) and Balon means a bare minimum of fourth place was achievable with a problem-free run. At Snetterton, Buurman was dropped from a net sixth to eighth by a puncture — at a loss of four points.

There was also a drivethrough penalty for a pitlane violation in the second race at Oulton Park, where they still finished third but likely would have finished ahead of Balon — who didn't lose a place with his final lap spin.

"Spa and the puncture at Snett did it for us," says Loggie. "I don't think as a team or as drivers we did anything wrong. It was just a couple of bits of bad luck."

The Evo Mercedes was slightly more peaky on the new-for-2021 construction of Pirelli rubber compared to the original-spec car run by the Nearys. Not going testing before the first race also meant it was playing catch-up at the start of the year, while new engineer Matt Harvey came in cold at Silverstone as DTM clashes counted out Alex Zochling. By season's end, it was a threat everywhere, but just came up short in battle with Marcus Clutton's Enduro McLaren for what became the Donington II win.

WPI's Igoe and Keen were the year's only repeat winners. But after dominating the Brands Hatch opener, their season went off the boil. They mysteriously lacked pace at Silverstone, finishing 11th, and never got a chance to rebound from second on the grid at Donington thanks to the contact from Jones.

After finishing second at Spa, a penalty for contact with Kelvin Fletcher's Bentley at Snetterton — a miffed Igoe felt he'd slowed sufficiently to avoid gaining an advantage — resulted in an unrepresentative seventh, and an off at Cascades avoiding the spun Morgan Tillbrook in the Oulton Park opener cost a likely maximum score when running ahead of Neary (who was later disqualified) and eventual beneficiary Machitski. Victory in Oulton's second race — from eighth on the grid — gave them hope, perpetuated by snaring Donington pole. Igoe reckoned afterwards that he had the pace to overcome their 20s success penalty, but the problem was he was already three laps down after two early spins.

Beechdean reunited 2015 champions Howard and Jonny Adam, who put together a strong title challenge until it all unravelled with Howard's qualifying off at Oulton. From 6.5 points behind after Snetterton, he duly needed a miracle at Donington that never arrived. Adam's hopes of a fifth title had already evaporated after a positive COVID-19 test forced him to miss Spa. ❄



AUTOSPORT'S TOP FIVE GT3 DRIVERS



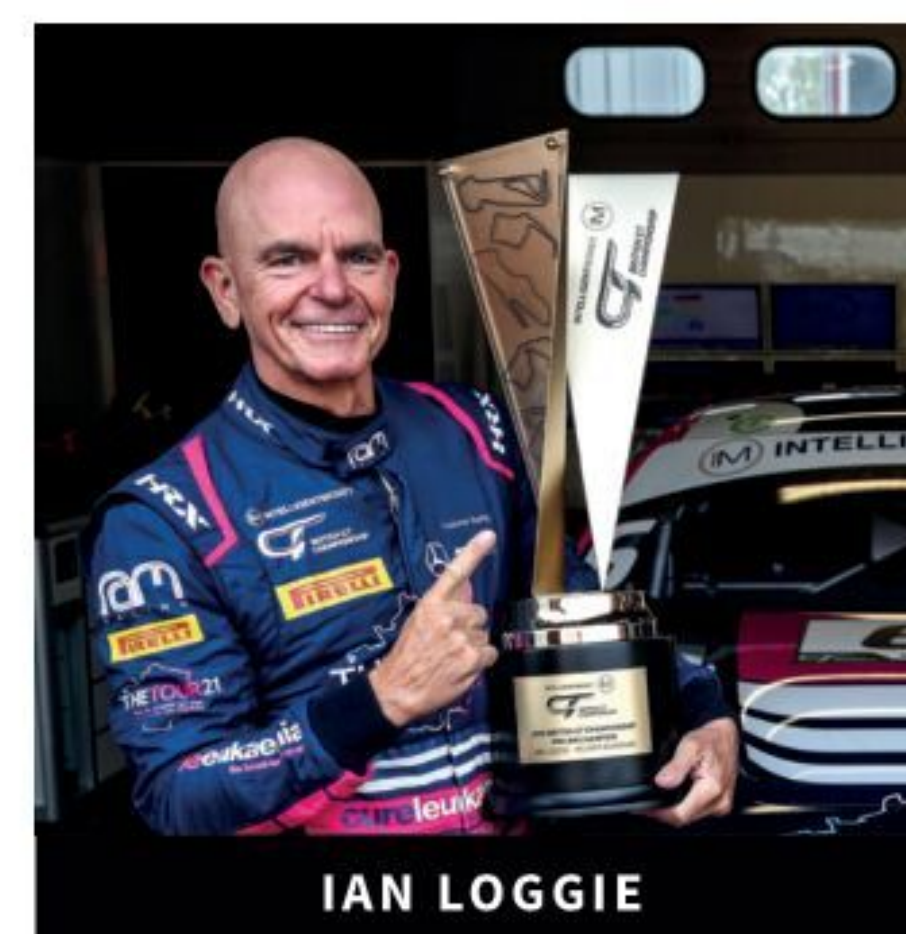
DENNIS LIND

1 In a vital season for his career, showed Lamborghini why it should waste no time in re-signing him. Took fastest lap at every track where he took part in a race, but didn't hamper Machitski in doing so. Laid to rest memories of a difficult 2020 in convincing fashion.



SANDY MITCHELL

2 Passed Lind three times this year — at Silverstone for a de facto win, and at Snetterton and Oulton in poor weather. Imbued with the confidence of Lambo works status, it rubbed off on Balon and, without being punted off at Brands, would have been a bigger factor in the title fight.



IAN LOGGIE

3 Not testing pre-season cost Loggie and Buurman, as they had to learn the new Pirelli construction at race weekends. Despite that, Loggie was the most consistent Am with his mistake-free approach. The crew's big points losses were beyond his control. Would have been a worthy champ.



LEO MACHITSKI

4 Oulton practice shunt and Donington II qualifying off hampered his grid positions, but Machitski saved his best for the races and was a factor everywhere. Stood firm under huge pressure in tense finale when it would have been easy to overstep the mark. Disappeared into the distance in standout drive at Spa.



MARCUS CLUTTON

5 Combined the stresses of running a new team with coaching a championship newcomer to the point of winning the final race. Made a clumsy move on Adam at Silverstone that deterred him going for it at Donington I, but took Donington II by the scruff of the neck with charging stint.



CENTURIONS DOMINATE THE GT4 BATTLE

Will Burns and Gus Burton were a class apart as Century's BMWs returned to the pinnacle of the GT4 pile

JAMES NEWBOLD

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**

That GT4 was decided a round early was entirely fitting of the dominance displayed by Century Motorsport BMW's Will Burns and Gus Burton. The champion and runner-up in the 2020 Ginetta GT4 Supercup lived up to their billing as pre-season favourites by leading every race and winning three times. Without British GT's success penalties (and being punished for a too-short stop in the second Snetterton contest), that tally could have been more.

Burns was initially committed to Assetto Motorsport's new

Ginetta G56 but, when a team-mate for him couldn't be found, Century boss Nathan Freke got his man. In its fourth year of running the BMW M4 GT4s, the 2018 title-winning squad had no excuses with two quick drivers and a decent testing programme that Freke says contributed to the car being "rounded off better this year".

"When that came off, I knew we were going to be strong," says Freke. But even he couldn't have anticipated the 0.897-second pole margin at Brands Hatch. Only a puncture denied Pro-Am Assetto pair Charlie Robertson and Mark Sansom victory, but

GT4 DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP TOP SIX



POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	PTS
1	Will Burns/Gus Burton	Century Motorsport	BMW M4	209
2	Will Moore/Matt Cowley	Academy Motorsport	Ford Mustang	112.5
3	James Kell/Jordan Collard	Team Rocket RJN	McLaren 570S	107.5
4	Matt Topham/Darren Turner (left)	Newbridge Motorsport	Aston Martin Vantage	106.5
5	Chris Salkeld/Andrew Gordon-Colebrooke	Century Motorsport	BMW M4	102.5
6	Ashley Marshall/Jack Brown	Balfe Motorsport	McLaren 570S	79.5



Moore/Cowley Mustang won twice, and the duo took second in points

“WILL KNOWS WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN A CHAMPIONSHIP, AND GUS IS OLD BEFORE HIS YEARS”

its rise was helped massively by frequent safety cars in the first stint that prevented Burns building a gap to negate the Silver crew's longer stop.

Burns was an unstoppable force at race starts. At Brands and Spa, he put GT3s between him and his nearest challenger. When he was not at the front of the grid, he usually found his way there within a few laps, but without roughing up others. At the first Donington Park visit, where others lost their heads, he was clean and decisive, yielding an unexpected win after a difficult qualifying. Burton, usually quicker in qualifying, had a tougher time against the Pros but showed maturity beyond his 18 years. He has a bright future.

“Will's been around for ages and he knows what it takes to win a championship, and Gus is old before his years,” says Freke. “Their pace is immense but, above that, the level-headedness to read situations and see issues in front of them is the biggest attribute I see to winning this championship. They had consistency in droves and the car has been reliable. Other than the Snetterton penalty, it's been a perfect year.”

Despite switching from Pro-Am to the Silver class mid-season, its sister crew of Andrew Gordon-Colebrooke and Chris Salkeld looked set for second in the standings for much of the year. But a poor end of the season marred by contact with Spa winner Jack Brown at Oulton Park and a failed tyre gamble at Donington dropped them back, as a late burst of form took Academy Motorsport's Ford Mustang to finish runner-up. Will Moore and Matt Cowley won twice, the latter driving superbly at the Donington finale to beat the perennially unlucky Alain Valente and Michael Benyahia (Team Rocket RJN McLaren), who were also denied victory in the Snetterton opener by a puncture.

Pro-Am honours were taken by the Newbridge Aston Martin that missed the opening round. With TF Sport not defending its title, Richard Tovey's team upheld Aston honour well, newcomer Matt Topham shining by outqualifying the Silvers at Oulton. He won on debut alongside marque stalwart Darren Turner at Silverstone and again claimed class honours at Spa (only denied outright GT4 victory by a track-limits penalty). But the title would have gone to Jamie Stanley and Nick Halstead (Fox Motorsport McLaren) if Gordon-Colebrooke/Chris Salkeld had been reclassified before their Donington I maximum score. ❧

AUTOSPORT'S TOP TOP FIVE GT4 DRIVERS



GUS BURTON

1 Narrowly gets the edge over Burns given his superior qualifying pace, lack of experience and stiffer competition in his stints, but nothing in it for race pace. Stunning pass on Gordon-Colebrooke at Brands aside, best moment came in defence against Scott McKenna's Toyota on old rubber at Snetterton. Took everything in his stride.



WILL BURNS

2 Had the most eye-catching moments of the year and excelled on his return to the series, enhancing his credentials hugely. In only his second season driving something other than a Ginetta in the past decade, he showed superb racecraft and was particularly electric at starts.



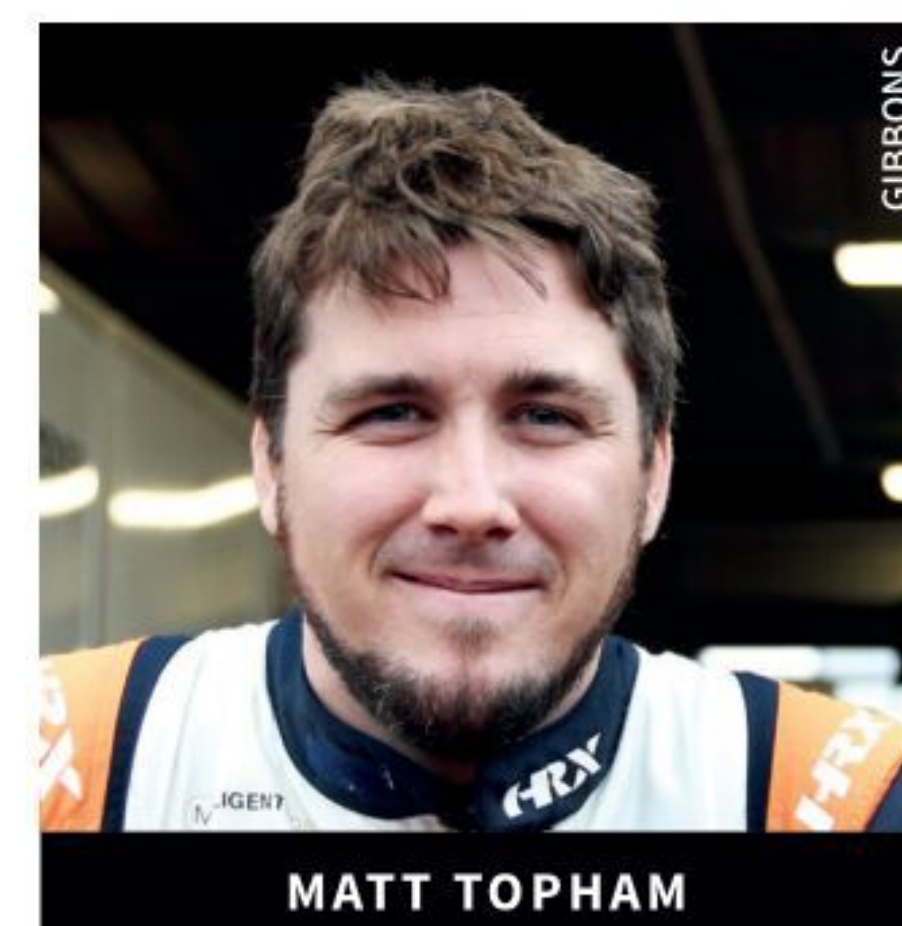
DARREN TURNER

3 It was a shame that his move-of-the-season contender on Jack Brown around the outside of Pouhon didn't lead to victory due to track-limits breaches, but the veteran again proved Aston's Mr Dependable by bringing out the best in newcomer Topham and always being at the sharp end in qualifying.



JORDAN COLLARD

4 Carried his team to third despite two non-scores (teammate James Kell causing chassis damage in testing at Spa and running out of fuel at Donington II). Only win at Snetterton was partly down to luck, but comfortably led race two's opening stint. Not his fault Kell couldn't capitalise on winning opportunity at Oulton.



MATT TOPHAM

5 The ex-Caterham racer struggled somewhat at Snetterton, and got a bit roughed up at Donington I and Spa, but won brilliantly on his debut and beat all the Silvers in his Oulton qualifying session. Targeting the outright title in 2022, and will only get better after hugely impressive first year.



O'SULLIVAN ROCKETS TO WIN

The Carlin driver just missed out on a coveted crown in 2020, but was on imperious form in his quest this year in the GB3 Championship

STEFAN MACKLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP



Any young driver with a realistic eye on victory is always going to feel some degree of pressure as they attempt to forge a career up the junior single-seater ladder, but for Zak O'Sullivan the 2021 GB3 Championship had perhaps added significance.

The Briton entered the series – still dubbed BRDC British F3 until an enforced mid-season name change courtesy of a decision by the FIA – having just missed out on the British F4 title at the final race in dramatic circumstances the previous year. It was a bitter pill to swallow and followed another runner-up spot in the 2019 Ginetta Junior standings.

To those on the outside, it might have appeared that here was a driver with mounting pressure on his shoulders in his quest for a maiden car racing crown. But, if the 16-year-old series rookie felt under pressure, he certainly never showed it as he was imperious over the 2021 campaign en route to the title.

"No more Mr P2 I guess," says O'Sullivan, who admits "at times" he felt more under pressure when sitting his GCSE exams this year. "F4 was a tricky one, looking back obviously the ending was a shame, there were a couple of mechanical issues throughout the year, but I also made a few too many mistakes for a championship campaign. This year I think it all went to plan, we had no reliability issues, I ironed out all of my mistakes. It's nice to get it off my shoulders and to finally be a champion in cars."

In similar fashion to last year's champion and fellow Carlin driver

Kaylen Frederick, he was the benchmark, taking more wins (seven), poles (five) and fastest laps (seven) than his rivals. Not to mention most laps led and even the greatest number of positions gained from the full reversed-grid races. Unlike Frederick, though, who endured a nightmare weekend at Brands Hatch that meant the American was forced to play catch-up, O'Sullivan almost never faulted. He led the standings as the championship left the opening round at Brands, courtesy of a win and third place, and never looked back as he headed the leaderboard throughout the eight-round, 24-race season.

Two further wins followed on the first visit to Donington Park, but it was his consistency that moved him to the fringes of the title. In addition to his victories, he recorded seven more podiums – only one of which wasn't the runner-up spot. His lowest weekend points total was on the second visit to Silverstone where he accumulated 'only' 52 points, yet still walked away with a win in the reversed-grid race. There was a further victory at Oulton Park in the penultimate round, and it was perhaps fitting his highest total of 91 points came at the final meeting at Donington, where he bagged a further two wins and wrapped up the title in style, as well as a finalist spot for the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award.

There was arguably only one major mistake all year, which came in the second race at Oulton where he tried a lunge around the outside of his old British F4 rival Luke Browning that ended with him in the barriers. Although not costly, it did mean he had to wait until Donington to be crowned champion.

AUTOSPORT’S TOP FIVE GB3 DRIVERS



ZAK O’SULLIVAN

1 The class of the field as he never once looked like cracking under pressure. Often the quickest driver but, on rare occasions he wasn’t, limited damage to his lead through consistency, only recording two retirements all year. At his very best in the Donington finale.



AYRTON SIMMONS

2 Recovered well to finish runner-up after a dismal mid-season slump due to car problems and lack of confidence following Brands Hatch crash. Two wins at Silverstone showcased he still has the speed, but he will be disappointed to have been so far off title contention.



ROMAN BILINSKI

3 Joined Arden after missing the opening two rounds but showed flashes of speed, winning three times – most impressive being race two at Spa. Just missed out on a top-six in the standings but kept out of trouble having arrived with a reputation from British F4.



CHRISTIAN MANSELL

4 No retirements all year helped the rookie to third in the standings. Highlights included a superb launch from seventh on the grid to win race three at Brands Hatch, and victory in race one at Spa in the wet as he helped Carlin secure the inaugural Teams’ title.



REECE USHIJIMA

5 Looked like a genuine title contender after his Silverstone brace before challenging O’Sullivan next time out at Donington. Two collisions with the Carlin driver seemed to derail his momentum, though, and he failed to reach the podium again until the final round.



Simmons was expected to challenge O’Sullivan but Brands crash put him on the back foot

“THIS YEAR IT ALL WENT TO PLAN – I IRONED OUT ALL OF MY MISTAKES”

While many expected O’Sullivan to challenge for the title, arguably the pre-season favourite was a returning face. Ayrton Simmons had raced for Chris Dittmann Racing in 2019, securing third with a hat-trick of wins to his name. After a part-time campaign in Euroformula Open and British F3 in 2020, he returned to the British series intent on claiming the title.

His season began in perfect fashion with a pole and win at the opener, but a collision with Bart Horsten’s Hitech GP machine at Druids on the first lap of race two would have far-reaching consequences. “If you see it from the outside [the incident], I would never have thought all the things that we changed were actually damaged,” says Simmons. “We had troubles with the diff at Silverstone and found out the tub wasn’t in its best shape.”

The former Award finalist went through the mire, only recording a single top-five placing across the next four events courtesy of a reversed-grid win at Silverstone. “The mood wasn’t right after that dip and we were all scratching our heads,” admits Simmons. “Everyone is doubting themselves, the team are doubting themselves, I’m doubting myself, am I not the driver I used to be? It was a real low point and I think one of the many positives this season is how we bounced back from that.”

He did recover some form – a double victory on the second trip to Silverstone and a podium at Oulton – which was enough to grab second in the final standings.

The Hitech GP pairing of Reece Ushijima and Horsten – both in their sophomore seasons – were also expected to challenge and the duo had speed, taking five poles between them. Ushijima scored an impressive double pole/victory at Silverstone in June, narrowing the gap to O’Sullivan at one stage to just five points, which the Carlin driver admitted was “probably the only point of pressure” during the campaign.

But too often there was inconsistency – and in Ushijima’s case, collisions with O’Sullivan at both Donington and Snetterton. While for Horsten, there were only three podiums all year, none of which were the top step.

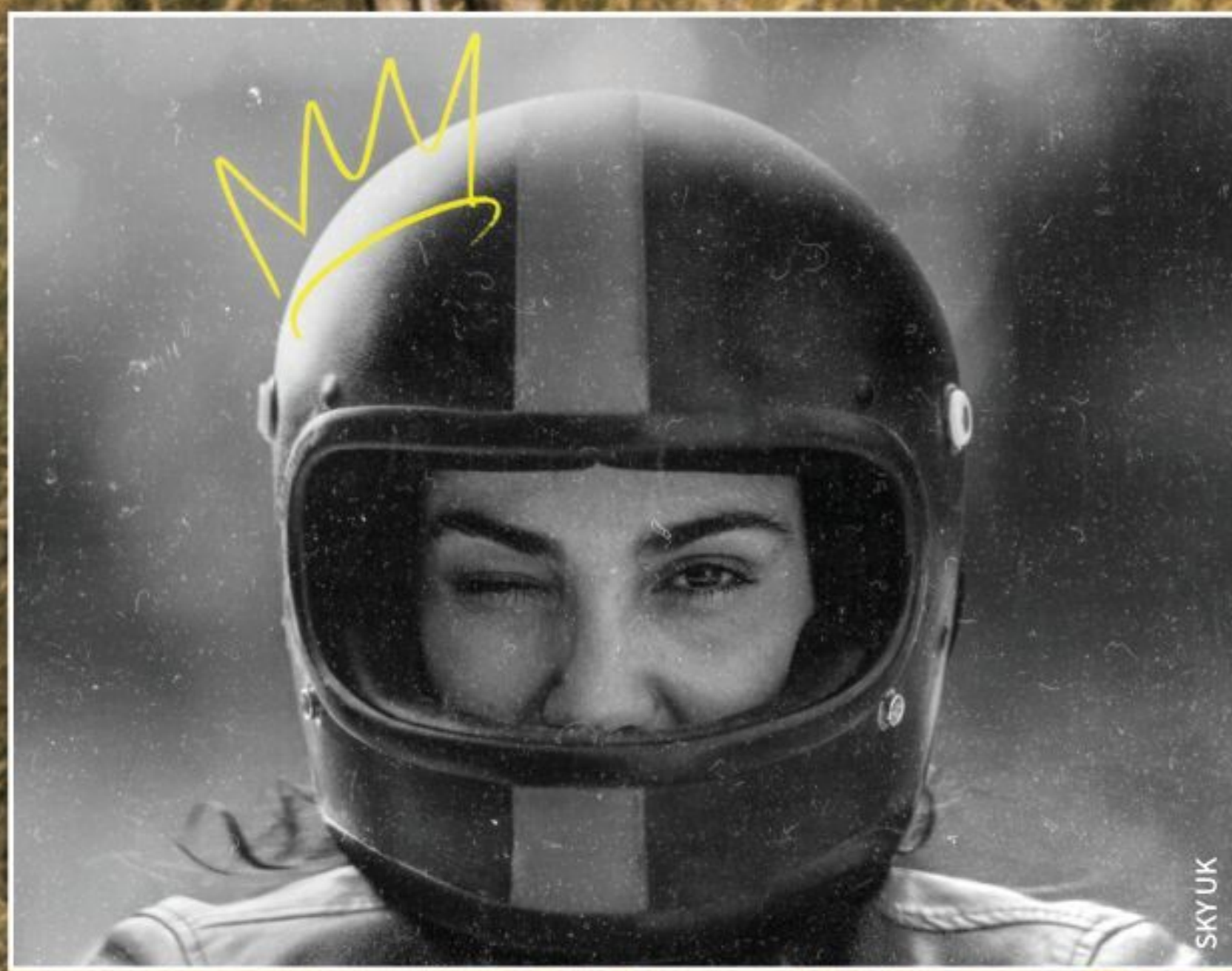
There were others who matched O’Sullivan for speed, namely Ollie Bearman and Browning. The former only intended to do a part season – his focus being on clinching the Italian and German F4 titles, which he did in emphatic fashion – and impressed, taking a win at Snetterton and three further runner-up spots in only nine races. Browning appeared only for Oulton, securing second before being disqualified for a skidpan indiscretion but won race two after contact with O’Sullivan.

But none of that mattered to O’Sullivan, who heads into the winter in the knowledge he has what it takes to be a champion. 🏆

DRIVERS’ CHAMPIONSHIP TOP SIX				
POS	DRIVER	TEAM	WINS	PTS
1	Zak O’Sullivan	Carlin	7	545
2	Ayrton Simmons	Chris Dittmann Racing	4	381
3	Christian Mansell	Carlin	2	375
4	Reece Ushijima	Hitech GP	2	366
5	Roberto Faria	Fortec Motorsport	1	360
6	Bart Horsten	Hitech GP	0	323

FINISHING STRAIGHT

IN THE MEDIA • ARCHIVE • HAVE-A-GO HERO



THE 'QUEEN' IN HER OWN WORDS

DOCUMENTARY QUEEN OF SPEED

Michele Mouton remains the only woman to have won a World Rally Championship event outright, and 2022 will represent 40 years since she finished as runner-up in the 1982 campaign.

The career of this trailblazer is the subject of a new documentary *Queen of Speed*, which airs on Sky Documentaries and Sky's streaming service NOW on Saturday (20 November).

Produced by Drum Studios in association with Sky, and directed by the award-winning Barbie MacLaurin, the film recounts the story of how Mouton fought to break into the male-dominated world of motorsport in the 1970s and 1980s to winning four World Rally Championship events in the Group B era, while becoming arguably the most successful woman driver in motorsport history.

The documentary digs deeper into her unique life story, from discovering a love for rallying to being accepted by her rivals and the pressures and politics of competing

at the highest level. It also covers her ground-breaking success, and the tragedy of losing her father and its impact on her best chance to win the WRC title while driving for Audi in 1982.

It offers a personal, emotional and raw account as Mouton narrates her career, illustrated by spectacular archive footage. This is complemented by candid interviews from her long-time co-driver Fabrizia Pons, contemporary rivals Ari Vatanen and Walter Rohrl, and journalists who covered her career.

Mouton has previously knocked back offers of autobiographies and documentaries, but was persuaded to embark on this project by her daughter as a way of preserving her story for her grandchildren. "It is my career told by me, so it should be the truth," she says. "I hope some more girls and women will watch the film and be inspired by it."

Mouton explains in detail how she "disrupted a masculine world" and how being "accepted was her motivation" for succeeding in rallying.

One controversial story that's

retold is of how Vatanen, then driving for the Rothmans Rally Team, said at the time he "would stop rallying if he was beaten by a woman". The 1981 world champion, who said that Mouton "had awoken the rally world" with her maiden win at that year's Sanremo Rally, is offered a right to reply in the documentary, 40 years on from those comments.

Mouton also reveals that she initially thought a phone call from Audi asking her to join its factory WRC team was a "joke", and her passion and desire to win is brilliantly portrayed by behind-the-scenes footage – the best example being shots of forthright conversations with Audi mechanics.

While Mouton's insights are equally fascinating and heartfelt, there's plenty of humour in the documentary, largely provided by accounts from the bubbly Italian personality of co-driver Pons, who remains a close friend. Pons is really able to drill down into explaining the struggles, while recounting the emotions of their success as if it happened yesterday.

Another area where this





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SAO PAULO GRAND PRIX REVIEW

Lewis Hamilton fought back from 10th on the grid to win the Sao Paulo Grand Prix with a late pass for the lead on title rival Max Verstappen, while off-track there were plenty of talking points and controversy. Ariana Bravo is joined by Autosport's F1 reporter Luke Smith and director of digital strategy Jess McFadyen to discuss all in the latest Autosport podcast.

Go to autosport.com/podcast



Mouton was persuaded to tell her story by her daughter, and hopes it will inspire others

documentary excels is its soundtrack – from the roar and the pops and bangs of the fearsome Audi quattro to iconic 1980s hits from acts such as the Eurythmics, it helps transport the viewer to the Group B era.

Queen of Speed shines a light on the struggles Mouton faced to be accepted, purely as a result of her gender, while it also underlines the sheer natural talent she possessed behind the wheel, which rightly

places her in motorsport's hall of fame. It also hammers home the fact that, in 40 years, no woman has come close to emulating her, which provokes its own questions as to why this is the case.

There has been a wealth of motorsport documentaries produced in recent years, and *Queen of Speed* is among the most captivating, eye-opening, inspiring and thought-provoking of them all.

TOM HOWARD

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FINISHING STRAIGHT



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Flames lick from the exhausts of Jean Alesi's V12-powered Ferrari 643 at the 1991 Spanish Grand Prix at the new Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya. Alesi could have been driving a

Williams FW14 that season, which by September 1991 was clearly the fastest car in Formula 1. But instead the French-Sicilian was led by his heart... and toiled to make the best of a car that lagged behind Williams

and McLaren. In Spain, Alesi scored his final points of the season in fourth as team-mate Alain Prost – in his penultimate start for Ferrari before getting sacked – finished runner-up to Nigel Mansell.



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HAVE-A-GO HERO

When drivers crop up in unexpected places

JAN MAGNUSSEN

“There’s so much going on the whole time. It was like a bar room fight for three hours.” As a veteran of 24 Formula 1 grands prix, Jan Magnussen is no stranger to the limelight. But the Dane admits that he tried to go under the radar for a one-off NASCAR Cup Series appearance at Sonoma in 2010, which he describes as a “fantastic experience”.

Alongside his sportscar commitments with Corvette Racing, Magnussen had been working with Hendrick Motorsports to develop road course set-ups. “As a bonus” he was handed a race chance aboard a fifth Chevrolet fielded by sister squad Phoenix Racing. “The testing had gone really well and I had high hopes,” recalls Magnussen. “But the way you get prepared for a race weekend is quite different from anything else I’ve experienced before. The amount of running is very limited.”

Magnussen qualified 32nd on the 43-car grid for the 110-lap race, but was intent on staying out of trouble as those around him became embroiled in push-and-shove. “I made a plan immediately from stories that I’d heard – I needed to stay below the radar for as long as possible,”

says the four-time Le Mans 24 Hours class winner. “The other guys that were there just for the road course race were being super-aggressive to begin with, and they did get ahead of me, but they soon got wiped out by the locals!”

One of those was two-time DTM champion Mattias Ekstrom. Magnussen admits he was measuring himself against the Swede, and ultimately beat him (Ekstrom was spun out by Brad Keselowski) by finishing an impressive 12th. But his race wasn’t without incident, hitting Carl Edwards four laps from home to send the incensed 2008 series runner-up into a spin. “He had me in a stranglehold after the race!” laughs Magnussen. “I got pushed into him, but it was still me that hit him. I got pushed into him right after his spotter had told mine that they were racing for points. But my spotter told his that we weren’t...”

While there was more testing with Hendrick, sportscar commitments kept Magnussen out of a return. “I hoped to do more,” he says. “But obviously my calendar at that time was pretty booked, so unfortunately no more came out of it.”

STEFAN MACKLEY



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Autosport, ISSN number 0269946X, is published weekly by Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG, United Kingdom. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. Subscription records are maintained at Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

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CIRCULATION TRADE ENQUIRIES

Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT.
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7429 4000.
 Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd, 28 Planetary Road, Willenhall, Wolverhampton WV13 3XT.
 ISSN 0269-946X. Autosport is published weekly by Autosport Media UK Ltd, 1 Eton Street, Richmond, TW9 1AG.

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